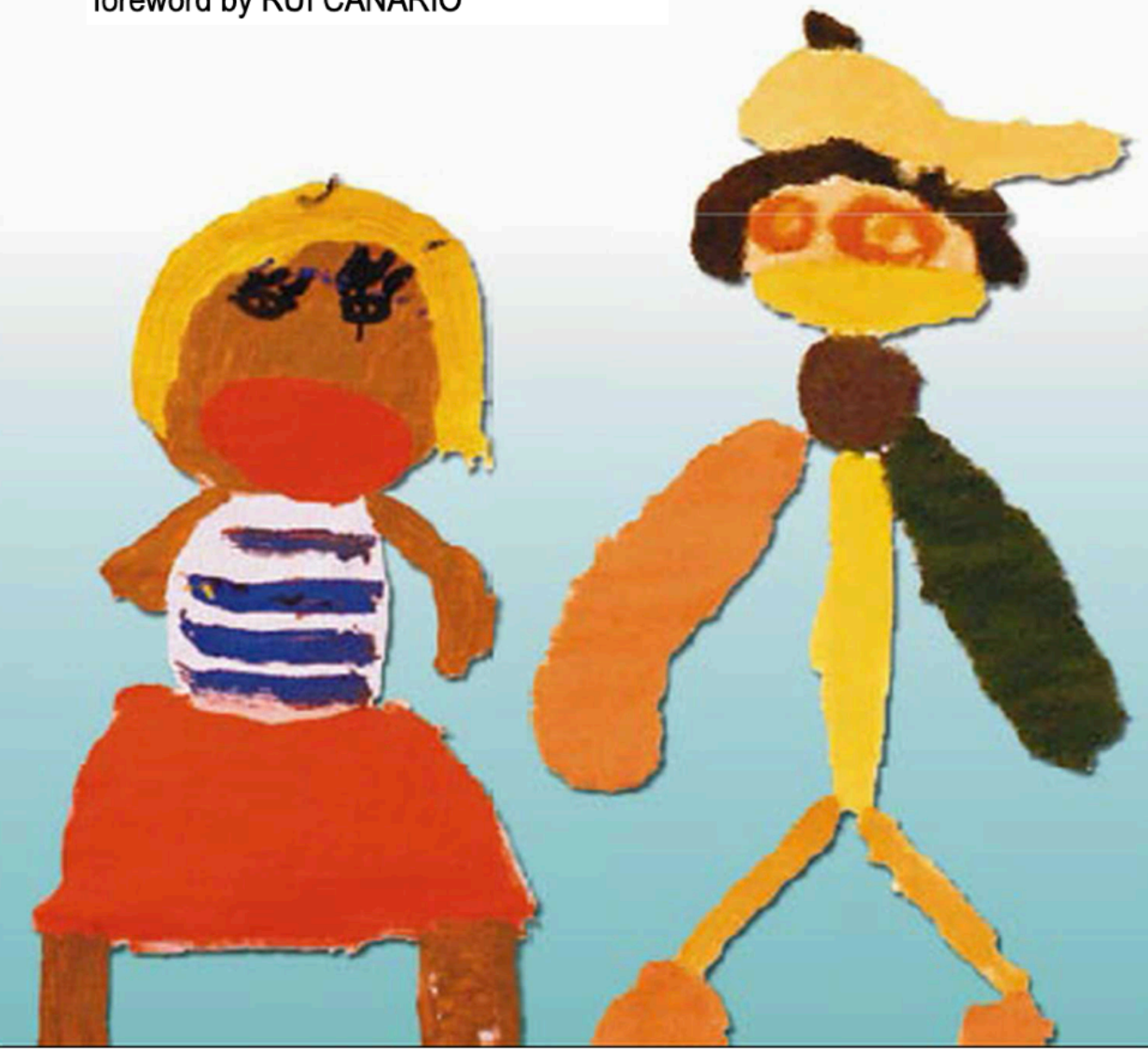
PASCAL PAULUS

SCHOOL IS MADE BY PEOPLE

Undi N ta bai?

foreword by RUI CANÁRIO



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Pascal Paulus

School is made by people

Undi N ta Bai?

With a forward by Rui Canário

(Translated in 2026 as e-book)

To the girls and boys
to whom democracy and
citizenship rights are denied,
inside and outside of school

Opening note to this translation

This translation, why now?

My friend Marta Comparada recently told me that she had accepted a position in a class that was very similar to the class where I had my adventures at the Outurela-Portela school, which has since changed its name.

I found it strange. The book was written almost twenty years ago and recounts a year of work spanning more than a quarter of a century. Does school continue to promote the caste system I encountered at the time?

From what my friend was telling me, it seemed like she had jumped back in time and ended up in 1999.

Then, of course, I remembered.

Fernand Oury said: "we are the Cro-Magnon of pedagogy, we chip our tools." And then he warned that in matters of education we have to count by centuries, not years. That is, half a century might only be a few half chipped tools for the few Cro-Magnon of education who work where they are most needed. The Homo Habilis of the final chapter *Another kind of education is possible* is not yet in sight.

Despite increasing and not decreasing segregation — separating in service of an ultra-liberal society where those who will rule those who will be ruled by it — some stubbornly continue to do things differently. They want to make commun tools available to those who learn and discover that they too are human and therefore can

also speak up instead of being labeled as animalistic by the well-meaning who live far from a reality they refuse to see.
My friend said she was rereading underlaying book and wanted to talk to me about it. I thought maybe it would be good to reread it myself to see how to recommend something more recent.
My dismay grew as I came closer to *Modi ke djudam.* What I ponder at the end of*Grandi i Pikinote* and everything that follows still falls short of the enormous gap between teacher training programs and the school-age children my friend is talking about. This is despite some attempts by those who truly focus on the sources of poverty and often dehumanising conceptualisations of the word citizenship.
The possibility of seeing a nation divided between those who have to learn to obey and those who have to learn to make themselves obeyed is more visible today than it was twenty years ago. The Taylorisation of schools seems to be more present today. The only missing part is further automating the control over those who only have to learn the essentials, as Lassalle said, learn to be a good and humble worker, learn to be a happy poor person, as Pestalozzi advocated.
It saddens me to know that my experience in Outurela and Portela is a source of support for those who are in State school today.
It pleases me to know that there are determined Cro-Magnon accepting the challenge to continue putting their expertise at the service of children with whom few want to work. The convivial school that Illich dreamed of is more necessary than ever. We need such an institutional space. De Sélys and Hirtt said in 1998, therefore yesterday: *"They have already managed to isolate people in their cars. To imprison them in their homes in front of their televisions.*

They have dismantled the large factories. One of the last bastions where people can still meet, talk and unite is school".

To achieve this kind of convivial school, it's better not to escape into nebulous fantasies. Illich isn't talking about a society without schools, but about deschooling of society. That's something quite different. A formal space-time where children have to be, is a good place to collectively begin to institute institutions that help. The Council, the space where the outside world can mix with the inside world, the intervention projects inside and outside help all learners in the group, that is, children and adults involved, to find each other little by little.

And so, upon rereading the book and listening to my friend, I realised that from something I thought was obsolete, perhaps some passages still offer reflection for those who are currently practicing.

Certainly, there are imperfections that will need revision. Who knows, maybe I'll have to leaf through the book again in twenty years.

Alqueva, May 10, 2026

Foreword

"Without a plan, there is no questioning."
"Without questioning, there is no project."

The book now published by Pascal Paulus, whose production process I was able to follow and which I have the privilege of writing the preface for, is an explication of a project (the author's professional trajectory) and a questioning (The constant questioning, the curiosity, the research into professional practice). It is the unusually rich journey of a primary school teacher who began his career more than a quarter of a century ago. He practiced in different countries and contexts, participated in pedagogical movements (Institutional Pedagogy, Modern School Movement) and interacted with prominent figures in contemporary pedagogy (Fernand Oury, Sérgio Niza). He worked alternately with very diverse audiences (children and adults). He knew different institutions (State schools, associations and cooperatives). He was an educator in schools and in the field of vocational training. It is this journey that, in a review, this book returns to us, combining an autobiographical account with an explanation of professional practices. In this text, which aims to encourage teachers and all those interested in education to read and learn from this book, I will try to show why it is *important*, *opportune* and *necessary*.
Popular wisdom says that "only the wearer knows where the shoe

pinches". Many write and speak about school without any real knowledge or competence. Teachers speak and write little. This book is an important contribution to understanding our school reality and what constitutes the competent and rigorous practice of the teaching profession. Pascal's testimony is very important because he speaks from experience and knows what he says, because he writes from a serious explanation and reflection on what he does. It is a solid and rigorous testimony produced from "inside" the school. The experience that is most extensively and meticulously recounted concerns a primary school located on the urban periphery of Lisbon, inhabited by the modern "condemned of the earth". The conditions of the neighbourhood, the social and ethnic origin of its inhabitants, and the relationship of the students and families with the school environment define a particularly difficult context that encourages discouragement and justifies failure. But that's not what happens: the description of school activities gives us the image of a teacher who enjoys what he does and pupils who learn to enjoy school and achieve the learning that public education is supposed to provide. Reading Pascal's narrative allows us to understand the "miracle" (which is, fortunately, not a unique case).

The school presented to us is literally "invaded" by the social problems that correspond to the harsh reality of the neighbourhood. In the Read, tell and show moment "*Luís announces that his mother is pregnant. Cláudia immediately asks if it's her husband's*"; "*Mafalda's father got drunk*"; "*José recounts that someone stole his mother's gold chain, Luís asks if they were black*", Guida recounts that someone stole her mother's ring and her uncle's car;

"*Cláudia announced that her cousin was released from prison and that he was very happy*". As Pascal explains, what was discussed in this space ("the uncles and cousins imprisoned for robberies, or for having the wrong color in the wrong place") had very important consequences. The non-moralistic listening attitude made it possible to create mutual trust and turn the pupils' experiences into study material. Many research opportunities arose from this. This pedagogical approach is only understandable in light of the immersion and empathy created by the teacher with the neighbourhood and the families. Pascal recounts: "In my first year of work, the bakery was a good place to start parent-teacher meetings. I often managed to speak with the parents there, or at the grocery store next door. Little by little, the bakery became a place where I received messages."

This "openness" to the school's social context is a necessary condition for creating relevant work situations within the school and the classroom, without which learning does not occur. And what does this work consist of? It consists of a relationship between people who learn to enjoy and give meaning to what they do, in a relationship that is not always easy. There are problems of indiscipline and disinterest. The teacher notes in their diary: "We are in crisis. For two days we haven't had Read, tell and show because of the noise." There are conflicts; the teacher is, in addition to being a professional, a person and therefore has "anguish and joy," "gets upset," "gets irritated," and is passionate about what they do. Studious and competent from a didactic point of view, the teacher uses Cuisenaire rods in teaching mathematics, provides children with the use of Logo and the practice of programming. They make

written production a central and structuring aspect of schoolwork.

> *“When the children realised that the written word put them in communication with others, some of whom lived in very different realities from their own, publishing became an obsession: in addition to the class newspaper published regularly each month, there was correspondence with other children and many adults, email, special newspapers, the writing of two plays and, in the middle of the second year of work, the launch of the class website.”*

The work of both students and teachers does not necessarily have to be arduous and meaningless. The teacher, Pascal explains, is not a skilled worker who moulds students as if they were raw material, nor is the school a Taylorist assembly line. Almost a century ago, a university professor called Antônio Sérgio "crazy" for defending freedom and education through autonomy. For the critic (now ignored), educating would be equivalent to "making a pot." The schoolmaster would be the "potter" and the student the "raw material." Today, the same critic would call Pascal a "son of Rousseau" or a "romantic" (always a gentler term!). The truth is that the effectiveness and didactic rigor revealed in the account of Pascal's pedagogical practices are accompanied by a constant concern for promoting the autonomy of the learner, giving the teacher a decisive facilitating role: "I bought a small notebook, a kind of pocket diary, for each of the students, so they could build a personalised mini-dictionary, in which I write down the words they ask me for in their free texts.”

Concern for and success with children's “basic” learning do not imply a practice that reduces basic education to learning to read,

write, and count. For this teacher, pupils are first and foremost, and always people. In school, they learn to practice democracy and assert their rights. They learn to engage in politics by intervening in neighbourhood problems or publishing a special report on women in Afghanistan who oppose the Taliban. Pascal recounts: “On more than one occasion, the children learned without scheduled citizenship classes.” It was through action that “children who were said to need support, interventions, and specialists in troubled neighbourhoods became politicians”.

I began by emphasising the importance of this book. It is now important to highlight its opportunity. We live in a time wherein, like mushrooms, those who offer opinions on education proliferate in a register that António Nóvoa called the "ground zero" of thought about school and that Angelina Carvalho, in a happy inspiration, classified as "armchair coaches" (sometimes they are also right, just as stopped clocks are right twice a day). In a clear and dense way, Pascal Paulus returns to us the profound complexity of the teaching-learning process in the State school of our days. Without simplifications or reductionist dichotomies. Education is not reduced to school, nor is school work exhausted in didactics. With the intellectual humility that is the mark of those who produce something, more than answers, Pascal questions himself and us. More than certainties, he has doubts and interrogations. Like every competent and serious educator, Pascal does not own the "keys to learning." The answers he constructs are provisional and always subject to the scrutiny of critical examination. It is this humility that allows him to recognise and be available to learn from the children and families he works with. Everyone is a person and, in their

different roles and the asymmetry of their positions, everyone has something to learn and to teach. Quoting a phrase attributed to Einstein, Pascal states that the only place where “success” precedes “work” is in the dictionary. But, invoking popular wisdom once again, we all know that when one loves what one is doing, it doesn't feel like work. Why not give it a try?

The opportunity of this work is particularly evident at a time when many interests are working against public education. Pascal’s testimony is a motivating example for those who fight for a State school for all, with "the qualities" that allow it (and this is no small feat) to increase levels of intolerance towards injustice, inequality, and various forms of domination.

This work is important, it is opportune, and it is also *necessary.* We are living through a difficult time for teachers, who have been turned into scapegoats for all the ills affecting school systems. The teaching profession is today persistently and continuously humiliated and offended. It is necessary and urgent that teachers speak out. As Pascal did, with the authority he draws from his practices and the legacy of ideas that inspire him (Oury, Freinet, Illich, Freire, and so many others).

Thank you, Pascal.

Rui Canário

Lisbon, April 20, 2006

What you might find... or maybe not.

> *It is important to state that those who deny my pedagogical qualities, which they claim are drowned and nullified by politics, are just as political as me. Only, obviously, in a different way than I am.*
>
> *Paulo Freire*

The Creole in the title of this work stems from the simple fact that the children of Outurela and Portela and their families "forced" me to write a diary. They provoked in me the restlessness that gave rise to the text that follows. I owe them my gratitude, expressed through a symbolic reference to the language and culture of many among them.

"*Writing is scraping*" said the Dutch writer Godfried Bomans. I now realize how painful this statement is. After 6 versions, 5 reductions and 2 rewrites, here is a document... far too long.

I am grateful to everyone who corrected and supported me in cutting and rewriting, and I ask for the patience of those who read this. I am open to continuing to learn how to say the same thing with fewer words.

A retrospective narrative, two stories from a log, and some commentary, is the proposal in 4 movements:

Undi N ta bai — where am I going?

I try to focus on the problem. The question is how I became aware

of the isomorphism that exists in the activity of educating children or adults, when the work focuses on the person's learning project.

Undi N ta bai? *N ta deslokadu.* Where am I going? Am I really out of place?

Kristiaan Magnus provocatively mentioned 100 reasons not to change anything[1]. It was inevitable; I had to meet him, as I met many people who, even so, chose to change things. As a group, we changed some things: we created a school, we taught people to read and write in a country that aimed to have no illiterate people within its borders, we brought teenagers and retirees together in the same space to interact, we stubbornly sought to work with children and adults in State schools, we invested in women to mend the torn social fabric in the areas where they continue living, while the men are looking for work far from their land. A reflection, "I confess I live...".

Grandi i Pikinote, Big and smal...

In my formative journey, my time at the neighbourhood school was very important. Any formative moment is a synthesis of all previous moments. When, at the end of 2002, we finished reading the story of a seagull and the cat that taught her to fly, I felt that not only had all the Ditosas in the class grown, but also Zorbas himself[2]: if they learned to fly, he reinforced his net, after having found himself 'on

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1 Magnus, Kristiaan (1983: 148) I particularly like reason 47: "We will have to commission a working group to study the matter."

2 Sepúlveda, Luís (1997).

the verge of a nervous breakdown'. The reflection is based on the logbook *Captivated between Outurela and Portela*, as if it were a detailed 'close-up' of ten months of a professional journey that began in 1977.
The lexicon, included at the end of the book, clarifies some terms that have a specific meaning in the classroom context.

Modi ke djudam? .How did they help me?
They truly helped me, the big ones and the little ones from Outurela, after all other big ones and little ones, introducing later on new big ones and little ones. They reinforced some of my ideas. They modified others. They opened avenues for new experiences. I draw some conclusions, aware that learning involves "*A set of proposals based on the perspective that the most consistent change in methods and attitudes stems from ongoing professional experience and is built through critical reflection on real problems and cooperative negotiation between interveners and trainers*"[3].

I conclude with three brief notes in *Another kind of education is possible*.

[3] Niza, Sérgio (1997: 81).

Undi N ta bai

> *The limits of Utopia are a siege called reality, and we may come to know that this practice of ours has a distant horizon. One cannot claim that the revolutionary is utopian. What rather happens is that the utopian ends up being revolutionary.*
> *This revolution is necessary because pedagogy has stagnated in obsolete formulas, outdated practices, and archaic principles.*
>
> *Miguel Ángel Santos Guerra*

The adult, a trainer in training.

I have been working in training since 1977, with audiences of varying ages between 6 and 83 years old. I have worked in extremely varied contexts, from the most informal to the most formal, such as State schools, with all their norms and rules. For some time now, I have thought that, in methodological terms, provoking learning processes between adults or between children is governed by the same mechanisms. I have become convinced that a educator is[1]:

a) *A promoter of the organisation, initiated and pursued by the trainees with discreet and effective support from the trainer;*
b) *an emancipating agent of trainees by encouraging autonomy and making explicit the responsibility for the actions in which they are involved and where they progress;*

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[1] As says Sérgio Niza (1997: 35)

c) *a catalyst for the cooperation negotiation process;*
d) *a civic facilitator for the training group, reinforcing agreements, highlighting coordinated efforts, articulating ideas and proposals, and facilitating the development of operational and moral rules;*
e) *An active auditor for each learner and the training group, in order to stimulate, encourage or liberate speech and the exercise of divergent thinking, critical attitude, and negotiation procedures to seek convergences in democratically grounded decision-making.*

It seems to me that formal contexts, in which the space and time of training are embedded, do not have a prohibitive influence, even though they can decisively condition the course of events. As a educator, one is certainly conditioned by one's own life history, both professional and personal, and by the way this history fits into one's work with learners, whether children or adults.
The relationship between the educator or teacher, the adult learners or children, and the training or teaching-learning process is characterised by 6 elements[2]:

1. adults carry with them a life story.
2. learning is always a process of individual transformation.
3. learning is always an institutional change.
4. teaching-learning involves working collectively to solve problems.
5. teaching-learning should utilize cross-disciplinary knowledge.
6. as Sartre states, man is characterised by overcoming situations.

And it is around these topics that colleagues and people I work with

[2] Canário, Rui (1999: 21).

engage me in questions and provocations such as:

- In public education, the rules are different; you can't work the same way you do in private schools.
- You certainly haven't had the same freedom of action in the private schools where you've worked.
- Working as an adult educator is very different from being a teacher, except for literacy instruction....
- That is fine in Belgium, but things are different here in Portugal.
- You should have more advantages here than in a country like Belgium, right?
- You'll see that the idea that working with adults or children is the same thing disappears when you work in one of *those* really complicated neighbourhoods.
- A project focused on building citizenship in suburban areas? Do you think it's possible?
- Working with parents from the school's perspective is not education. It's "imprisoning" parents in a closed, scholastic view of education.
- Emancipatory work takes place outside of school.

These are great starting points for new challenges. More recently, while working simultaneously at SEIES[3] and in MEM[4], the idea of

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[3] *Society for Studies and Intervention in Social Engineering, Crl*. A cooperative created in the 1980s with the goal of intervening with people in their environment, reinventing interactions, projects, activities, and interventions.

[4] Modern School Movement. Association of education professionals, active in Portugal since 1966, presenting a socio-centred teaching-learning model, constantly improved through workgroups that are isomorphic to the practice with children and promoting cooperative self-training.

isomorphism in formative intervention has become more consistent for me.

Questions and observations, such as those mentioned above, led me to choose the Outurela and Portela school for a new foray into working with children and their adult relatives, after 4 years of working exclusively with adults.

Knowing that it's not difficult to 'occupy' a group by teaching them, I refused, as I had done before, to opt for this solution. As in previous situations, I wanted to discover people's desires in order to facilitate their learning process.

It turns out that the desires of groups of people in formal contexts are strange. I came across a group of children who claimed to want to 'be taught', presenting a distorted view of the learning process and reproducing commonly prevailing models to exacerbate the conflict.

In the beginning it was very difficult, and there were times when I didn't know if I would be able to implement the line of work that I always thought was possible to develop with any group. I started writing my logbook as a survival strategy. Four years later, it seemed to me that this group of students had helped me take a qualitative leap as educator and teacher, reinforcing the idea of the comprehensiveness of the methodology I chose to use.

The initial and current agitation

In a provocative manner, Fernand Oury and Aida Vasquez observe that the order is *not to change anything before changing everything* when it comes to working on institutional change, whether in schools, other institutions, or society in general. And they continue

saying that *"Primary school teachers don't need to get involved: the defenders of the school system detest disorder; the minister detests 'anarchic and poorly coordinated...' experiments that revolutionaries condemn in the name of Marxism. These attempts in schools are disorder, reformist illusion, so excuse us but no."*[5]

Throughout the presentation of their work, they counter this almost fatalistic position of imposed immobility.

The initial restlessness I felt as pupil and student, even without openly questioning, but seeking to understand the comfort and discomfort that school produced in me, made me attentive to observations and interventions regarding school when I reached the age to choose my profession. At that time, I already had some informal work experience with other teenagers, which ended up shaping us mutually, even if we occasionally had the support of teachers specialised in the subject being studied. The indirect way I came into contact with institutional pedagogy, through my father, and through my encounter with the Paris group that wrote and published monographs under the motto only to recount what had been done, had an important effect in proving to me that all that restlessness I felt was not unique to me and that writing a monograph not only recorded a history but also helped one to understand how one evolved to a particular situation.

I continue to find it difficult to accept the existence of a well-developed, comprehensive, and finished '*Science of Education*'. *"In this domain, it's better to admit that we are in prehistory. Thus, demanding, stubborn, aggressive, rude, intolerable, and unadaptable,*

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[5] Oury, Fernand & Vasquez, Aida (1977: I 34)

rejecting the beautiful language and philosophical flourishes of our masters, Cro-Magnon of pedagogy, we tirelessly carve our own flint tools, which may serve others"[6].

Every institution I've been a part of has had its contradictions.

The Normal School, where a group of teachers tried to broaden our horizons by pointing out paths of action-research in pedagogy and in the didactics of some subjects, but which at the same time safeguarded the entire normative context that mandates very rigid hierarchical relationships between directors, inspectors, and teachers, provoked a constant back-and-forth between proposals for innovation and the maintenance of rituals.

After a short time in Belgian State schools, I started working in a private school, created by parents (and later recognised by the belgian government and integrated into the state's network of secular State schools), where I faced another contradiction: I had to normalize relationships between children who had experienced a total absence of institutionalized power, which led the most resourceful establishing themselves in Power with their arbitrary rules. This period allowed me to first become familiar with the realities of urban schools in the Netherlands, then in Italy and Spain and later on in Portugal, especially in the Lisbon area.

Working at another semi-private school made me realize another important limitation in the push for change: I began to understand that pedagogical practices are only changed ***with*** people, never ***for*** people. Attempts to form pedagogical teams that discuss and reflect on their work have not yielded great results. Moreover, the motivations of

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[6] *Idem*, (1977: I 65)

those commissioning the work didn't go very far either.

But, with some colleagues from MEM, we were able, in other contexts, in State schools, to show once again that it is possible to work together. "*In five years, a demonstration was made:* The New Popular Pedagogy*, born 30 years earlier, is not, in essence, reserved for the children of peasants. It is there, available. Don't come telling me: 'Those Freinet methods, oh yes! They're very good... in the countryside...', because I would be able to innocently ask: 'Why?', knowing very well what you are questioning*"[7].

Another constant driving force in my work involves career changes[8]: during my time in Belgium, as I will explain later, I moved from school to adult education. The need to experience education in different contexts led me to work in local development after four years in school. The creation of a teachers' association, using institutional pedagogy groups as a reference to promote self-training supported by the practice of others — which I will later come to know as cooperative self-training when I join MEM (Portuguese Modern School Movement) — also sparked my interest in working with adults, with literacy groups as my first entry point.

Leaving for Portugal kept me in this back-and-forth between teaching in primary education and working as an educator in the context of local development. I spent another 5 years in school, after which I worked for 3 years in a cooperative. My connection with MEM led me to work at this organisation's resource center for

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7 *Ibidem,* (1977: I 134)

8 I wrote this in 2005. I've been retired since 2024, but I still find it beneficial to diversify professional activities.

2 years, after which I returned to school. In the chapter *Grandi i Pikinote* I recount my first full year of work in a State school in Portugal, which serves as a basis for understanding the extent to which students helped me in my self-development.

With 29 years of professional experience, roughly half of that period working with children and half with adults, usually in a local development context, I sought to connect the writing of monographs, such as those I encountered in institutional pedagogy, with my writing within the Movement, creating accounts of practices that I believed would be useful for cooperative training. I want to better integrate my understanding of local development, supported by the records of friends[9]. This need for integration arises at a time when schools are the target of much criticism from all political fronts. Theories that link education sometimes exclusively to work and employment have each contributed to this critique of the school as an institution.

As an educator, trainer and teacher, I am not satisfied. I continue to believe that an isomorphic work model, independent of the learners' age, which proposes that they become the creators of their own learning[10], makes change possible.

In search of an isomorphic model of educational work

Working with adults and children: hypotheses of interference.

I am using an educational device that focuses on the learner, and I

[9] With particular emphasis on the book by José Hipólito dos Santos (2003)

[10] Meignant (1999) refers to this instituting model in work with adults.

want to illustrate isomorphism.

First, I review and comment on my experience as a person, as a educator as well, up until I started working at the Outurela school, to document that: "*The anchoring point or generating matrix of learning and development is, naturally, experience—"the past of the system," the cognitive anamnesis, a history. This is how we advance in knowledge, starting from prior knowledge, from what has already been experienced or from past practices, and through critical pauses (Habermas, 1987), awareness, metacognition, or evaluation*."[11].

From there, I leaf through my diary, retracing the path I took with my students, some 6, others 7 years old at the time. It was a difficult journey of building relationships based on differing views about school, stemming from my desire to re-engage a group of children in their learning within a humanistic context. I analyse the conflict I perceived at the beginning of my work with this group, trying to devise strategies to reach the group first, and then their environment.

Children's Contributions: hypotheses in a pedagogical relationship.

The pedagogical relationship I describe when discussing my work with the students at Outurela is based on the concept of cooperative learning. It may not be immediately clear to the students that this is a process that values self-development, including that of the teacher. It therefore implies a process of familiarisation:

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[11] Niza, Sérgio (1997: 22).

> *"Groups forming cooperatively and using this matrix as the primary center for group self-formation need an instance or device for aggregating experiences, which constitutes a platform for the inter-regulation of actions. This collective coordination instance transforms itself in the short term into an instrument for multiplying ideas and regulating internal and external processes, evaluating the quality of proposed achievements, and self-monitoring shared decisions. In the modern school, this center for democratically negotiated decision-making is called the Council."*[12]

It is therefore justified to have extracted from my logbook all references to regulatory instruments, highlighting the Council in its various phases, interconnected with the phases of *Count, read and show* and some more specific moments related to the 'control' of school learning.

This choice allows for an understanding of the process of building the pedagogical relationship between students and between students and the teacher. It highlights the need for constant listening and self-criticism in order to adapt my intervention strategies to the children's reactions. The path I describe cannot be interpreted as the best possible in this context, much less as a model. I preferred to describe this experience I lived through, keeping in mind the advice "*Saying nothing that we haven't done*"[13] as a guiding principle.

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[12] Niza, Sérgio (1997: 31).

[13] Oury, Fernand & Vasquez, Aida(1977: I 35).

Undi N ta bai? N ta deslokadu

> *If, for example, I exclude educational action from my political action plan because I can only concern myself with education after the transformation, I render the plan unfeasible. If, on the other hand, I emphasise only education with programs of a technical and/or spiritual and moral nature, I fail to mobilize and organize the political forces indispensable to change; the plan gets lost in empty talk or becomes pure welfare assistance.*
>
> *Paulo Freire*

Reflections of a permanently displaced educator.

There is a certain irony in quoting at this moment a phrase by Marie-Christine Josso, spoken in the context of certification and continuing education: "*Teaching conceived from the logic of a single discipline seems very much like an extremely precise cannon shot, but fired at an unidentified target. If the teacher was convincing, I say to myself: 'let's put this away in the attic, it might be useful someday'.*"[1]
In fact, lately I've been rearranging my own attic quite a bit, and in the stored boxes that I started opening and peeking through, I found the material to construct the following text, which will, I hope, be the basis for further reflection.

I confess that I live...

... with a wink to Pablo Neruda, who burst into my life through my Chilean refugee friends, then with Mikis Theodorakis and *Canto Genera*l at the Ostend Casino, and even with the postman at a

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[1] [1] Josso, Marie Christine (2002: 99).

Lisbon cinema.
With him, I learned how good it is to be driven by our passions. For me, passions have shaped the course of my involvement in life. I've always had passionate conversations: with my grandparents, with my female friends, with the two or three male friends who won me over, with the two or three people who definitively influenced me, with people I've crossed paths with for varying lengths of time. These conversations almost always made me rethink my professional path, in the sense of putting myself back on the path of questioning, when normalising frameworks pull too hard. Many of my actions result from affection. The affection with which I encountered Institutional Pedagogy, with people who greatly impacted me. It was with other affections that I became involved in local development. It was with great affection that I dedicated myself to building a school project in Leuven. It was paternal affection for Inês and Sara that kept me fighting against a normalising and uninteresting school system for children, in a country where I ended up by chance, out of passion and affection, and not because I considered the country particularly interesting, much less in its educational expression. But it was precisely in this country that I found other wonderful people who, with the same commitment, invest in change, and thus became interlocutors who comfort me, through the listening ear they lend me, through the words they offer me.
Other interlocutors offer me the written word. Even though as they are separated by time or space, they are incomplete interlocutors. They offer me their words and the pleasure I derive from them.
My ideas, my way of being, which influence how I want to intervene

as an educator of adults or children, are the result of alternating periods of building circles, and therefore of great agitation, with moments of calmer waters.
There are breaks, restarts. But I recognise a certain consistency in my consecutive professional interventions: an exciting moment of appropriating the situation, of questioning, of discussion, a moment of structuring the action, and a moment of withdrawal. And now, by the logic of the sense of time, a new moment has joined: one of retrospection on previous interventions and what they provoked in formative terms. Little by little, the past returns to the present, thus becoming another intervening factor in shaping the future.
The writing style shifted, albeit hesitantly, from chronological to thematic, while maintaining a certain chronological entry point for the beginning of each description. This then connects to the description of the Outurela and Portela period in the next chapter.

The Belgian period

Old conversations remembered again...

I

I remember my two grandfathers: Lucien, who lived in Oostende, near me, and who died when I was 11 years old. He died in May '68. And that made me not remembering May '68. I remember other things. I remember seeing him cry during the Cuban Missile Crisis, when I was barely 6 years old. I remember walking in the snow, pushing his car, a big old American Ford. I remember him taking me to the German cemetery from the First World War, where the

statues of Kate Kollwitz and the parents mourning their dead son are. I remember him showing me the small identification plaque, right under the granite statues. Then he would take me to the village of Ypres to show me the names of the soldiers missing and killed in combat. Many of them had been his comrades when he was in the trenches.

Much later, after my grandmother died in 1995, and while I was helping my mother move things out of their house, I found a photo of him, taken a few months before the First World War: a young 'bohemian', a regular at the intellectual and cultural venues of Oostende, people like James Ensor also frequented. An image of him that he had never shown me, one that was even unknown to my mother.

After being demobilised following the First World War at the age of 25, he was more or less given the school certificate he never obtained through formal academic means. He learned on the job. Because, after four years in the trenches and some more in the barracks, it wasn't possible to go back to school. He was too scarred. My mother told me this after he had died. I understood it better when we organized his documents after my grandmother also passed away.

That's when I remembered him telling me how, during World War II, he had kept his small brick factory afloat until the British bombed everything. It was a matter of keeping jobs for his workers. But at the same time, he was aware that he couldn't work for the German occupiers. He couldn't because, as I later realized, he was Belgian, socialist, officer from the First World War, disbelieving that anything good could come from that war machine, which was seeking

revenge for the defeat of 1918.
So, he falsified the clay for the bricks to have firing defects. And he documented everything for the post-war period. It would be proven that he had been right to do so, because after the war, he was summoned to court to investigate whether he had collaborated with the “enemy”.

II

The other grandfather, Louis, was 11 years younger. He was 10 when Lucien was in the trenches. He was an orphan. He had 3 brothers and 3 sisters. The sisters stayed with the family, the brothers were in the orphanage. He used to tell stories he made up to me and my sister when we went to spend the holidays in Ghent. The stories always featured a boy and a girl who lived in their grandfather’s house.
He lived in a huge house, the service dwelling for the manciple he was at the Normal School in Ghent. On weekends he would take us to a small park, a little outside of Ghent, by public transport. For us it was a treat: our parents traveled with us by car. He didn't. He accompanied us in the last seat of the bus and exaggerating our jumps every time the bus went over an obstacle.
With him, I made countless trips on foot from one side of Ghent Park to the other, when he retired and had to vacate the school’s outbuilding. He rented a house on the other side of the city park, and we exchanged all the small materials in plastic and cloth bags. I was about 15 years old at the time, and we talked a lot about science, about mathematics, about people, about school.
He reminded me how nine years earlier, sitting on his lap, I had

learned to read the stories of *Pol, Pel en Pingo*[2] meanly through book number 2 of the series in which the friends meet a whale. My grandfather had to take care of the whale replicas because they were in capital letters and I still couldn't read them. It was Christmas of the year I started primary school, where I learned to read with fun stories, but from another time. Later, I realized it was a global method based on type words, the compulsory reading learning method in Flanders[3]. I still used it for another two years in secular State school when I started working. But school is another story.

III

At another school, I began learning the fourth language, mandatory part of the curriculum. I couldn't choose German as my mother wouldn't allow it, partly because of a war in which my parents were younger children than the teenager I was. Therefore, I stayed in the Spanish course, the only real alternative — Russian and Italian were only options on paper — with a teacher who made us read Castilian poetry, including works by Garcia Lorca and Pablo Neruda. Afterwards, in a language they didnt understand, I would recite the few poems I had learned to the girls I met: at school, but especially in the youth group *Belgian Youth Association for Nature Studies* (BJN) with whom I spent long periods cycling, during all the holidays, to observe birds, to survey the flora in protected areas in Flanders and the Netherlands. It was the group where I learned to play chords on the guitar, where I learned to sing ballads and protest songs so

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2 Petzi, Pelle, Pingo in English

3 Hoogeveen's reading board.

striking that they continue to constitute my only repertoire.
There was always a great desire to sing, talk, and above all, spend time with the girls. I found their conversations more interesting than boy's conversation topics.
One morning in September, when my mother burst into my room to tell me that very serious things had happened in Pablo Neruda's homeland, I was deeply shaken. A month later, I was translating paperwork for the first political refugees I met: a group of Chileans staying in a summer holiday centre near Oostende. One of the families came from Valparaíso. He, Marcos, a playwright, was a personal friend of the late poet. But he was also friend of disappeared and murdered people, like Salvador Allende himself, and of people who had been brutally mistreated.
Marcos' daughter and son told me, after we watched Costa-Gavras' *State of Siege* which depicts another coup d'état but was filmed in Chile, how they too were mistreated by the military. They recounted scenes of torture, but at the same time laughed about the stupidity of those who had brutalised them.
My new friend claimed the Chilean dictatorship would last at least 20 years, a generation, enough to make people forget what had begun to sprout in Chile. A little more, a little less, depending on what would happen in other Latin American countries, depending on future presidents of the United States of America. "And then," he said, "they will need young Chileans to rebuild the country, not old playwrights telling dreams. I will return to my country, but as a tourist. I won't have the opportunity to return to help rebuild it." He told me this, only to then marvel at the Big Dipper and the Little Dipper, which he couldn't observe, there in Chile, in the Southern

Hemisphere.
He returned to Chile as a tourist in the 1990s.
It was also through him I became acquainted with the work of Paulo Freire, from whom I read some articles he brought me in Spanish. I was enchanted by the apparent simplicity with which the educator got people to read: searching for words with meaning, giving meaning to their written representation. That was more or less what I thought reading was about. Only after entering the Normal School did I realise that he was Brazilian, also expelled from his country for many years, that he was indeed also an educator, that he had developed a methodology for working with adults, very similar to what I was learning and practicing with Institutional Pedagogy.
Meanwhile, I listened to my father talking to his Chilean friends. In French, which wasn't always easy for Chileans. He talked about his work with students on apprenticeship contracts. Sometimes I had to translate. There were strange things, like that time he said ironically: "*It seems there's only money to work with them because, since the war, the gas chamber is banned*." It was the first time I realized that neither school nor society served everyone in the promised land called Belgium.

IV

When I was finishing 12th grade, a teaching assistant suggested a 5-day trip to Prague during Easter holidays. One of my Chilean friends, who had already been to Berlin, Prague, and Budapest, advised me to keep my eyes wide open and observe.
That’s when I met Marie. She was two or three years older than us

and was our official French-Czech interpreter. After a visit to a vocational school, where I made many questions — for myself and for the others who were ashamed to speak French and as my mother was a French teacher at our school they automatically assume that I wouldn't — I mustered the courage to suggest Marie to spend the night with us at the bar of the hotel so we could talk more. She didn't show up. But the next day, I was covered in pimples: the hotel responsible called a doctor and Marie. I had chickenpox and had to remain in quarantine. Since nobody at the hotel spoke a language I also spoke, I was entitled to an interpreter for some time every day.

We talked a lot. In French. She told me she had learned French in Brussels, where her father had been an attaché at the Czech embassy. Now he was at home. But he's retired now? I asked. The answer was "more or less". After 1968, a lot changed.

Little by little I understood a part of a story that had never been told to me very well. A story of repression, at a time when I was recovering from the death of my grandfather. I suddenly remembered a nighttime argument at home, between my father and a friend of him and of the teaching assistant who was also the local president of the communist party. He insisted my father was "*one of them*." And my father, who didn't need much to get worked up, replied: "*I can't belong to anyone and I can't belong to any group that thinks it has the right to think for others*." And I remember the strange look that accompanied the *"Do you think so?*" to the reply *"But we know how the people should be educated and we are taking care of tha*t."

I opened my eyes without leaving the hotel, some years after this

conversation, while engaged in a different conversation...

Oostend, leaving and returning: two sides of a mirror

I

The next part of the story begins in 1975, late one evening, in a pub this time. It seems to me that it was there that Professor Leo Michielsen informally steered my career choice in a specific direction. It was after a lecture given by this eminent historian about the resistance in the Second World War. We were having a drink, the speaker had become listener, and he let me talk about an article my father had written, in which he reported on the visit he and some colleagues made to French primary school teachers[4] who were working in special classes in schools in the Parisian suburbs. With the certainties of my 17 years, full of the desire to change the whole world, and bored with my own secondary school teachers, I must have delivered a scathing critique of the education system...
At one point, Professor Michielsen interrupted me and asked what I was going to do after finishing 12th grade. I replied, "Something related to pedagogy, either at university or at a Normal School for teacher training." He didn't answer immediately, but looked at me for a long time and said, "It seems to me that your energy will be better used at Normal School than at university."

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[4] In French "instituteur," in Flemish, "onderwijzer," which differ in meaning from the generic "teacher." (In 2026 I know that *onderwijzer* is derived from the verb *onderwijzen*, which in turn is made up of the words *onder* — lower support — and *wijzen* — to indicate the path to wisdom. *Onderwijzen* therefore has the original significance of supporting those who seek knowledge).

The phrase came back to me a few months later, precisely when the Belgian state was helping me to choose a profession through its employee at the school's career guidance center[5]. This on-call psychologist asked me “And Mr. Paulus, do you already know what studies you want to begin?” I seemed to hear the voice of my interlocutor from three months earlier, and I automatically replied, “primary school teacher”. "Very good” the employee replied, “therefore, Blankenberge”. I think that's why I enrolled in Ghent[6].
Once in Ghent, I quickly made contact with others “eager to change the whole world”. I brought the articles I had about that group of French teachers, and a plan began to take shape in my head. On the next visit of my father and the teachers of the students with apprenticeship contracts to Paris, I had to be part of the group. The fortunate coincidence of Arlette, my pedagogy teacher, having as her mentor a professor who was also a teacher at the Normal School and an old acquaintance of my father, helped in the execution of the plan, giving the visit the character of an internship, which I will describe later[7].

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[5] PMS – centrum: Psycho-medical-social center. A service that everyone was required to attend at the end of the 12th grade.

[6] In Flanders, the *onderwijzer* (primary school teacher) works as a single teacher for 6 years of primary school. At the time, graduating was done by Normal School (normaalschool) after finishing the 12th grade. Today graduating is at Higher School of Education.
Blankenberge is near Oostende. Ghent allowed one to argue that it was necessary to have a student room... and gain independence from parents.

[7] See below. See also Dekeyser (1982), describing this group's first meeting with Fernand Oury in 1970, which I was unaware of.

Arlette was a vegetarian, as I was at the time. I was a vegetarian on principle, because of my activism in a nature group; she was because she had a weak stomach. She was a recent graduate and lived alone, as I did. But she had rented an old, small worker's house while I lived in a room in a student residence. Furthermore, since her house was roughly halfway between our favourite pub and my room, we spent entire nights discussing the world's problems by candlelight and wine, and she made me read texts I never would have read if she had asked me to in her function of pedagogy professor. We discussed Rousseau, Descartes, the Sophists, the 1936 reforms in Belgium, and the influences of the New School movement.

II

My 'accomplice' was my grandfather, already retired from the Normal School, to whom I told these stories. My paternal grandfather, now a widower, continued to live in the house I had helped furnish a few years before. I spent a lot of time with him. Little by little I discovered new facets of my grandfather. He had never told me that before becoming manciple, he had also worked as primary school teacher. I only knew that had started his career in Tienen, where he was from, but since there was also a Normal School there too, I thought he had worked there. One day, when I spoke about a class with the mathematics teacher Omer Mogensen who enchanted me with the Cuisenaire rods, he went to get some boxes from the attic. He told me: "*Look, when I worked with the kids in Tienen, I made this material to help them do their calculations.*" A bit like Cuisenaire. The material my grandfather had made in 1925 was

very similar to what we call MAB material.

III

Fortunately, at the Normal School, not everything was completely normal. A senior professor of pedagogy, a young female professor of pedagogy, a primary school teacher from the attached training school, a student, and some friends proposed organising an institutional pedagogy internship; during the autumn break, and far from Ghent, of course. Fernand Oury[8] agreed to the idea of the internship, but on the condition that it would be conducted in French. This greatly complicated the work for some Dutch colleagues we had invited.

During the internship, there were very heated discussions between the Dutch and the Flemish teachers. This was the reason why the internship led to a proposal: to translate *De la classe coopérative à la pédagogie institutionnelle (From the cooperative classroom to institutional pedagogy)* in Dutch. Fernand Oury immediately agreed: "*The book was written to be read. It's a militant translation, so I'll talk to Vasquez and the others. No copyright issues*." We began a project that would last six years, only achieved with a considerable investment from the publisher for the first two parts, while the Dutch Freinet Movement (FBN) took charge of printing the third part. All started at the end of 1976.

IV

I pick up the story in September 1982, when, after several years of

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[8] I'll tell you about my first meeting with Fernand Oury later.

working at the school[9], I decide to try new things.

I settle in Bruges, following a poorly discussed job offer, and end up unemployed for the second time. But only for a short time: in January 1983, I'm working in Oostende, my hometown. I meet a group of people connected to the Christian Workers' Movement, I read articles by Leonardo Boff and other leading figures on liberation theology. I meet a small group of people who were rehearsing literacy activities. We read Illich and reread Freire. Flanders is not Brasil or Chile, but the contacts with Chilean refugees help to contextualise situations: we set up working groups around researched topics: for fishermen, for grandmothers of young fishermen, for young people who dropped out of school as Belgium has compulsory education but not schooling until the 12th grade, so lot's of them 'escape' to be construction worker. There are older people with children who have emigrated to America, Australia, Asia: they want to get to know these countries better and gain writing practice, because telephone is very expensive and we are still far from the tools now fostered by social networks. Shortly after, we also start Dutch language groups for immigrants and other foreigners.

At the same time, we are working with a group of young people, encouraging them to organize a space where they can bring their heavy metal bands together. With the support of the young people, this same space will serve as a meeting place for senior citizens once a week.

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[9] I tell story the story from 1976 to 1982 later on in *Between Schools, Children and Teachers – Part 1*.

It is at this point that Oury writes to me: "*We have long chosen to work within existing contradictions. Keep up with your obligations. Continue to chip your stones to make tools. Prehistory is not the exclusive domain of primary school. There are some suggestions at the end of the CCPI*."[10]

This letter relates to another message I sent to Créteil, where he lived at the time. I started working with a group of young people on apprenticeship contracts. They go to the training center twice a week, where I teach general subjects. As I witnessed[11], there were some very conflictive situations. I read parts of institutional pedagogy, but I also reread Pedagogy of the Oppressed. And I remember older readings. My work in literacy and with young people clarifies for me how the school excludes. The school — of which all teachers are both agent and hostage — has very subtle ways of transforming learning into objectives and — supported by textbooks — making all teaching and learning a subject far removed from life. This school is thirsty for beliefs: grading norms, didactic fundamentalism, the assertion that there are weak students and strong students, the assertion of environmental blame. In this way, it manages to distance itself from the critical perspective needed to analyse the growing disinterest in school coupled with academic failure. Illich's statement, and I paraphrase, that those who have never been to school may know a lot, but they don't know what school failure is, makes perfect sense. Unfortunately, it also opens the door for attacks on schools from both the right and the left, to

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[10] Referring to Oury, Fernand & Vasquez, Aida (1977) (V 36-74 in port. Ed.)

[11] Paulus, Pascal (1987).

the point where the most radical propose its abolition...
But, as I said, working with young people is sometimes very hard. In addition, there are some conflicts with other teachers who work with the same or other groups.
As I'll explain later, we had launched a teachers' association that identifies with Institutional Pedagogy. The international meetings within the context of *The International Federation of Modern School Movements* (FIMEM) resulting of taking up membership in this international organisation, had a drawback in 1982: we were institutionally and personally caught in at that moment going on power struggle due to the leadership of FIMEM by the French movement and long contested by some German, Italian, Spanish associations as well as the French-speaking Belgian association. Following this behind-the-scenes manoeuvring, we were suddenly caught up in the organisation of the biennial *International Meetings of Freinet Educators* (RIDEF) in that year in Leuven, where I present a workshop over 9 mornings about my work with literacy groups.
After the 1984 RIDEF Leuven, I go on holiday to the French Alps with a couple of friends who put an end to my 12 years of vegetarianism, enticing me with all the regional pâtés and cured meats we found along the way. We had more or less agreed that we could set up a tent in the garden of Fernand Oury's little house in that area. My visit to the Alps becomes a little peculiar: "Do you have much to do? Do you feel like reading Miloud's[12] proofs?" Catherine and Oury talk about primary school teachers who do what they are not asked to do: help children catch up. There are specialists to do this work.

[12] Pochet, Catherine e Oury, Fernand (1992).

Oury says that the only thing he still does is to support distressed teachers. As if it were therapy. Catherine tells me things from her classroom. In the middle of the conversation, Oury suddenly asks me: “And the RIDEF? Do you think it's still useful for anything? A little rusty, isn't it?”

Truth be told, I'm really hungover from that RIDEF. Workshops that are rituals repeating previous meetings, with little connection to practice, but also little theorising. Some official representatives of official movements, reminiscent of Marie’s stories, some friendly old values, and a group of young admirers of Freinet. The ‘golden sixties’ with school flavour, gathered in Leuven. In the middle of it all, I learned about the work of two Portuguese colleagues, Manuela and Clarisse presenting documents on classroom management, the class diary (or wall newspaper, as they called it back then), and the Class Council (which they refer to as the class assembly). I'm fascinated and in love.. And I'm left with the feeling of having found soulmates amidst much talk about nothing as where institutional pedagogy isn't much appreciated.

The desire to return to school grows. So does the desire to move to another country, which will happen two years later.

Stories of a boy at school

Back to school. But how did I feel at school, as a child? My first-grade teacher was my first crush. She made up for the preschool teacher I hated and to whom I systematically said, as my father told me, "Not for me, thank you" every time she handed out materials for an activity. I immensely enjoyed working for this new teacher, and I did everything with a classmate, which gradually led me to transfer my

crush on the teacher to her. I decided to confess my feelings to her when the teacher announced she wouldn't be coming for a week because she was getting married. My classmate changed schools shortly after. My happiness at school quickly faded, not only because school doesn't like crushes, but also for other reasons.

I had for a while an understanding with my 3rd-grade teacher regarding reading stories. He would have someone read the assigned reading book aloud on Saturday mornings while he corrected the week's assignments. My classmates pointed me out as favourite reader. We read the adventures of *Pinkeltje* a little dwarf who lived with mice in a mansion in Amsterdam, where things happened that never happened to us. For that, the author Dick Laan was too Dutch. Since everything was new, I had to speed up the reading. And since I was the one who read aloud the fastest, I finished the book in a third of the time the teacher took. In fact, after I finished a book, he wouldn't let me read anymore. Later I realized that he had counted the pages to fill the school year. And I ruined his plan. Besides, I didn't always get along with him. One day we were sitting on the floor around him in the courtyard. He sat in a chair to tell us about earthquakes. He told us two things I dreamed about for several years afterwards: that an earthquake was unpredictable, and that, in the event of one, he could very well disappear, chair and all, into the bowels of the earth, while we might suffer nothing: the earth could open up in local cracks. So many times I wished that this could happen, with him or other teachers. But earth was never on my side in this...

Things got worse with my 5th-grade teacher, after a 4th grade with a teacher I really liked. May became a complete disaster: we had to

bring information about a bird, the cuckoo, and I brought a short poem. He embarrassed me in front of the class, saying I hadn't looked anything up, even though I'd spent a week at home, during which my father, mother, or grandparents certainly could have given me information. Well, it turns out I had spent a week at home, almost always in my deceased grandfather's house, often in his sleeping room, holding his hand most of the time. I was distraught and never forgave that teacher. Much less later, when I realised that the little notes I took to school after being absent explained exactly why I was absent: he didn't even read what the family sent!

To finish the section about elementary school, I still have to talk about my 6th-grade teacher. My mother had decided to move me to that *big* school .where I was going to continue my secondary education. It was very violent. Suddenly I was in the 'homosexual' school[13], where I had a primary school teacher wanting to be a subject teacher. Deprived of the closeness of female friends, I started having many life problems, to which were added the mathematics problems. I never understood why things happened. While others had reasonable grades, I always got 3s and 4s on a scale of 10. One day, when returning tests, I sensed another disaster: the teacher said that this time there were many very weak tests, with only one 10. Preparing myself for the worst, I didn't believe the only 10 was actually mine. But I didn't have much time to rejoice. The teacher made a gesture: with so many failing grades, he didn't consider the test. I stopped believing in teachers and

[13] The expression is from Fernand Oury (1977) book I- page 39 in the portuguese version).

mathematics for a long time. I stopped believing in grades and classifications forever.

Fortunately, the following year, the school opened its doors to girls. I was back in a mixed-gender class and had friends to have fun with en to speak with about other than sports and cars. Through my friends Anne and Veerle and the laic moral teacher, I joined the youth association[14] mentioned which organized excursions and work camps in nature reserves and protected areas, all self-managed. Only girls and boys aged 12 to 25 were admitted. The highlight in terms of nature observation was in July and August, especially at the last part of August, when we went to count migratory birds at the mouth of the Scheldt River, on the Zeeuws-Vlaanderen islands.

Between schools, children and teachers – part 1

I

As I mentioned earlier, an acquaintance Normal School teacher provided me with the legal framework to be able to do one of the compulsive internships in an institutional pedagogy class abroad during my initial teacher training. In May 1976 I was observing and participating in activities with the students of teacher Marie Jeanne Azuara. From that week, I remember how the children organised their work with great ease, while they themselves presided over a very lively parents' meeting. They did a project on Belgium, since there was the possibility of questioning the visitor. I remember discussions with Marie Jeanne and her husband, also a teacher, until the wee hours of the morning, about work organisation.

[14] BJN, see above.

And on Saturday, we all met, interns and teachers, in an apartment in Créteil. The host was a tall figure with grey hair, who greeted me with: “Ah! You smoke a pipe. Did you bring Semois?”[15] I didn’t. I had smoked all week a kind of mixed tobacco for pipe and cigarette, the only one I could buy where we were. “Lack of organisation! Lack of preparation! Aren’t you a student at the Normal School? Take my tobacco, it’s better than the poison you have there.” I had just met Fernand Oury.

“You spent all a week in a cooperative class. So what?” I listened to the conversation about the class rules the students had presented to us. They knew what it was about, they knew how those rules protected them. That was what everyone had found so wonderful. Just like all that organisation. Everything fit together perfectly.

“Yes! But things don’t happen spontaneously. You need a lot of time to get the class working. To de-school. To remove the fear (including the teacher’s). So they can have their voice. Some have never had. The printing press wasn’t invented by Freinet. It was Gutenberg who introduced it to Europe. So people could read the Bible with their own eyes, instead of reading it through the eyes of priests.”

Later, when someone mentioned the “underlying ideology,” Oury became agitated: "We published *Vers une pédagogie institutionnelle* (*Towards an institutional pedagogy) i*n 1967. Before May ’68, note.” Only later, I think, did I realise one of the reasons why he answered that way[16]. In the end he concluded ironically: “I was unconscious!

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[15] Famous Belgian tobacco brand.

[16] Oury explains this very well in one of his books. Oury, Fernand & Vasquez, Aida (1977) (book I, page 34 in the portuguese edition),

Instead of changing professions, we try to change ***the*** profession".

II

After another half a week at the Parisian school, I returned to the Normal School. It was a strange word, the one that defined the teacher training school those days. Normal school, where one is normalised; to be able to normalise others as well?

Meanwhile, I remember my suffering when I had to prepare lessons. The preliminary exercise tended towards the ridiculous: whether it was for reading a text, explaining multiplication tables with Cuisenaire rods, observing nature, teaching geography or history, the task was always the same: one had to anticipate all the interventions that one was going to make.

After this arduous task was completed, the preparation sheet was left to the classroom teacher, who would then pass it on to the methodology professor if he came to observe. He would use it as a guide, as if it were a guided reading. This made me sweat quite a bit, because some would cut the lesson short as soon as one deviated from preparation.

And if we set aside time for children to ask questions, to make the class more participatory, we had to anticipate not only the questions, but also the answers themselves. Why? To better respond to you, my darling! Standardised responses, of course.

III

In September 1977, I'm considered a primary school teacher. I waited some time for a placement. I was unemployed for the first time and during that period I could set up a bar with a group of friends, into which I had been introduced by Vera, a young Latin teacher and

therefore chronically unemployed. I met her at a party in the city of Ghent. The idea of a cultural bar, an ambitious project of a local activist group, would go bankrupt shortly after the group became a political party. During that period, I participated twice in discussion groups with Ernest Mandel. I finally understood the Club of Rome report, as well as the contradictions of the then Common Market. I will be vaccinated when the seemingly generous documents about culture, education, and training appear.

Meanwhile, at the bar and at home, I take the opportunity to learn a little Latin and a little etymology with Vera.

I ended up being placed, as a substitute, in a 5th and 6th grade class with 37 students. I panicked, and called Professor Ivan from the training school annexed to the Normal School, one of the translators of Oury & Vasquez book on Institutional Pedagogy.

He came over for a drink and we started organising my class. He put me back in touch with another friend, Fons, in Antwerp. We started a correspondence between classes. Fons also came over for a drink to discuss my pupils. Meanwhile, at school, the teacher I share the block with, would occasionally burst into my classroom to restore order. I wasn't very happy with how things were going. Ivan and Fons made me insist on the cooperative organisation of the work.

IV

In early January 1979, I began my civilian service, replacing my mandatory military service. It was a 20 months compromise, because I chose not to serve in the civil protection barracks, but in a humanitarian organisation. In May of the same year, I received a

visit from Jo Boey, from Leuven (Louvain), father of two school-aged children. He explained that he and other parents, some of them former students of the University of Leuven and nostalgic for May '68, had dreamed of a school experiment copying the Summerhill idea. But they were in trouble. The experiment, without a teacher but only with parents on duty and a mother-educator, had turned into a real nightmare: the children learned nothing of what the parents wanted, they didn't appreciate freedom, and the placement of a teacher this year hadn't improved the situation: the school seemed like the worst classic example of its own negation, and many of the children even after 2 or 3 years of schooling, couldn't read. The parents were worried and had tried to solve the problem by contacting Normal Schools. They found my pedagogy professor, who showed them my graduation project (a poorly written little report about my trip to Paris). Jo suggested to continue my civil service at that school with a colleague in the same situation, whom I was informed he had written his graduation text about the life of Freinet[17].

That summer I left Ghent. My new colleague, Ronni, already knew the school and had many questions. We discussed the unusual situation. We had a school[18] with interested parents. We had the parents' full support to schedule field trips, to get out of the school

[17] Dekeyser (1982) provides some context for our adventure, considering the beginning of this project as a mark of the definitive presence of Freinet Pedagogy and/or institutional pedagogy in the Flemish part of the country after two previous attempts.

[18] Officially, the children are enrolled in private homeschooling, which makes the situation legal for inspection purposes.

walls, we had complete freedom to organize the curriculum. But in the meantime, we decided to force the parents to stay away from the school for at least two months. My translation friends laughed at the situation: "You were thinking about deschooling the institution and now you're going to launch yourself a cooperative classroom, schooling children!" I admit that I didn't quite know what I was getting myself into either. We started to put together a pedagogical scenario at the Appeltuin[19]. The only full-time involved mother was another Vera, educator on call without formal training, but with a very broad vision of education and working with the little children. She has a creativity that seemed to have no limits. Little by little she told me about her work with prostitutes, whom she visited every week in the Leuven prison and in a shelter for abused women. I become an informant, to put women in contact with her and with the women's café, a café just for women, without ever having known where the shelter was located.

Meanwhile, Oury wasn't far away. On November 15, 1980, we launched the first volume of the translation of his book in Antwerp. Since the publisher paid his trip, he was present to speak to the press. We took the opportunity to bring him to our experiment. Like good disciples, we did exactly what the master had instructed us: we only accepted visitors in very exceptional situations, after discussing it with the children in the Class Council. Visitors are disruptive, etc., etc. When he entered, the children in charge of the day presented the classroom rules and asked Oury if he would

[19] Literally: the Apple Garden, due to the huge fruit tree in the garden of the first building they used and that served as a recreation area.

accept them. According to the class diary, he replied: “Là, vous m’avez eu!”

We hadn't planned anything special that day. The class, 19 children and two teachers — an absolutely luxurious situation — was functioning: work organised by individual work plans, a presentation about hedgehogs, typography for the class newspaper. At lunchtime, eating our bread at the local café, Oury is very critical: “You told me about children who still can't read. But you don't have difficulties! These children can achieve anything. I'm not criticising your work, I'm saying it because of the place where you work. But you'll hear this critiques! Many times. You're not in the periphery! Your environment seems more rural than Freinet’s itself, with all the comforts of the city. Meanwhile, be careful! Don’t build models that make others say: 'Of course, in this school, this is possible.' Institutional pedagogy is something else. You have your wharf? Very well, you are able to learn.”

Starting the afternoon, our diary says, there was a problem. Two children disappeared in the countryside. Nobody knew where they were. Oury stays in charge of the class — in French — and we start to search the whole area for them. An hour and a half later, we were back having not found them. Oury suggested taking one of the teacher’s car to the city: “The boys have a house, right? Let’s see.” We found the two children near one of their homes, 8 km from the school. We took them to the school, where we had a class council meeting, which Oury didn’t want to attend. “No need to air your dirty laundry in public, but you have to intervene now, immediately!”

At the end of the day, after everyone had left, he spoke to the

apprentice wizards: “See? Everything’s going well. I thought, the guys planned everything to show the visitors things properly. But then, life intervenes. Nothing special happened. A kid wants to show the new toy to another kid, or the collection of pictures, or whatever. And then, there’s the transgression of the law. A law they didn’t write. A law they didn’t vote on. Where is that law? The group establishes rules and follows them. Nothing wrong with that. The problem is not all rules and laws are established by the group. There are rules from the outside world. Rules about matters that have nothing to do with what happens inside the classroom, rules from the insurance company, the Ministry of Education, the school administration. The limits have to be clarified. Isn’t the school democratic? OK. But it doesn’t become more democratic if children can do everything. Democracy isn’t about letting to do everything. External institutions exist. Inside the classroom, I am the master. Here I can negotiate with all … the work context.”

A few days later, I received a letter with an internship offer. In the middle of the offer, a note: “I hope you have thoroughly discussed the law and authority. It might help you avoid feeling isolated.”

At the school, a group of parents, seeking official recognition from the school to guarantee teachers’ salaries, wants to know more about what’s happening in the classroom and understand the reasons why.

With Riet, a single mother of two of my pupils and with whom I get along well, I spend a lot of time discussing ways to intervene with the children. One night, after many other conversations, she told me that, having been involved with the school from the beginning, she was very worried about the way things were going. But at the

same time, she didn't much like the schooling solutions proposed by Jo. She wanted to show here displeasure with the way he tried to solve the problem without talking to anyone, introducing the new "faculty." Being a close friend of Vera, she was afraid that Jo was looking for a way to alienate her. She told me that I won her over with a very simple observation, in response to a question about the organisation of the rules and how the older children behaved in the face of those rules. I replied something like: "I don't understand the difficulty. The oldest one, anyway, is me, an adult." Today I would have said "responsible adult".

Thinking about these conversations and with another part of the book already translated, we agreed to organize discussion groups, somewhat in light of the work at FSV[20]. But the discussions quickly turned into a kind of deaf dialogues. When I complained, Oury replied, in his typical style: "Of course! What was going on in your head? By the way, have you switched to being a missionary now? Do you want to spread the good word? Afterwards you feel all deflated and tired... discuss your work with your peers. To the others tell what you did – and only what you did."

I understand. But I'm starting to think it must be possible to build learning groups in other contexts, groups that also develop rules and take ownership of their own learning process. I feel the need to working outside the context of the primary school. To see what's possible, and to have an outside perspective on that same school. I

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[20] An association we had just created, with the pompous title of Freinet Stichting Vlaanderen (FSV), literally Freinet Foundation of Flanders... A "teenager" mistake...

will take advantage of the announcement that official recognition of Appeltuin is imminent to resign. Riet encourages me in my decision. Although laughing at Oury's response, she agrees that it must be possible to do "institutional pedagogy" outside the school. I go to Bruges, where I become unemployed, then I go to work in Oostende[21]. A circle closed.

And what about working with children?

I have various memories from that period supported by writings and photographs. As one can see from the description above, I felt very excited and influenced by the people of institutional pedagogy. I think this is clearly revealed in a text I found back, translated in 1986, but written in 1982, therefore two years after I left *De Appeltuin*, which was by then recognised as a school. I think it clearly reveals the mark of Oury and my reading of the monographs published by the institutional pedagogy group.
At the same time, it illustrates my immature view of classroom work.

Ivo, the red dead-nettle[22], and the cow.

1. A new year begins.

I start working at a new school in a new city. There are 19 children, eight of whom come from the same 'anti-authoritarian' class, and I have another colleague with

[21] See above

[22] Lamium purpureum L. Flowers from March to May. It is common to see flowers at Christmas, even under the snow. Quite common in streamlets in meadows and woods – Belgium, Holland, Germany, Northern France.

whom I work on a team. Among the pupils there is Ivo, 9, illiterate. When he sees me for the first time, he stands in front of me and asks:

- Are you good or bad?
- ...
- I hope you're good.
- Why?
- Because I don't know anything!

I explain the colour and card codes. I agree with the pupils a two-week period for each one to discover their level. Ivo comes to me:

- Are these cards for everyone?
- Try.
- But there's only one card for each exercise!
- Okay. When you're finished with the card, you'll put it back in the same place you took it from.

And Jonathan, a classmate from last year:

- Oh! Pascal, with these cards, each of us does different things.
- That is correct.
- So, who knows more?
- I do.
- But does Pascal provide simpler exercises for those who know less?
- No. You choose the cards you think you are capable of making. When you discover your colours, each of you can choose and work on the cards that correspond to those colours.

Lieve says (a colleague of Ivo's at the previous school)

- You need to make special cards for Ivo.
- Why?
- I don't know, but last year's teacher did so. She always said that Ivo can’t do how to do what we do.

2. The morning meeting

We are in the third week of the school year. Benoit, one of the oldest, is presiding the morning meeting for the first time. At the end of the meeting he comes to me:

- The younger ones don't participate much in the morning meetings yet...
- Never mind... they'll get used to it soon.

One day, Ivo gives us some news:

- My mother has a job now.
- Was she unemployed?
- She was at home.
- So, where does she work now?
- I don't know.

A text from his three year younger brother explains it a little better: his mother works in a restaurant and his father is unemployed.

At a morning meeting during the last week of September:

Ivo: Yesterday I went to play soccer with my brother.

His colleagues start laughing, mockingly.

Lieve: Lies! Lies! You don't know how to play soccer!

Jonathan: He doesn't even know how to kick... he looks like a monkey.

The other students start laughing again. Ivo, very angry, stands up.
Walter shouts so loudly that everyone can hear him. "And the rule? The rule that says 'We don't laugh at others,' have you forgotten? You need to be punished!"
Walter! Walter is more or less rejected by the group. Integration problems. He can't even defend himself and takes Ivo's side. At the next Council, the others will apologise to Ivo and will be warned that if they laugh at a comrade again they will be reprimanded by who is in charge that day*. Ivo doesn't seem to be listening.

3. The group's life is getting organized... but what about Ivo?
Ivo doesn't speak during the Councils. He doesn't disrupt, but he doesn't participate either. When we distribute tasks, he doesn't want to do anything. (Didn't he understand?) When we hand out the coloured belts marking competencies, Ivo is yellow: *Tries to work, doesn't get in the way, tries to respect the rules, doesn't accept responsibility*.
Ivo doesn't participate in any projects; he hardly works with the cards, as he quickly exhausted the interest he showed at the beginning of the year. He has a white belt in all subjects – which means entry-level.
He doesn't write freely. He says he doesn't know how to write. He doesn't read. He walks around the room, observes his classmates, the bulletin boards. He picks up a book from the library, but gives up when Bart, the

person in charge, explains that after reading the book he has to fill out a form. He attentively watches Benoit as he arranges and organises the display table, which he is responsible for.
Sometimes he asks if he can help, and Benoit accepts the help. Ivo has a task, from time to time...
Autumn break arrives (November 1st to 7th) and I don't have a single drawing, text, or story from Ivo. His only writings are two poorly copied cards in his notebook, his signature on the collective letter to the correspondents. There are two criticisms about him in the class diary (to no avail, because of the yellow belt: he tries to respect the rules and, consequently, is protected by the level he's in).
I'm worried. Very worried.

4. Conversations

School holidays free us from the physical presence of the children, and we have time to think about them more calmly... and gather information.
I didn't have any report on Ivo, nor did I really know why he had ended up at the 'anti-authoritarian' class. I only knew he was in my class because I was there at the school right now.

Ivo's parents

Since his parents had little time to talk to me after school, I arranged to visit them at home during the holidays.
The father, 38 years and unemployed, has had 13 different professions and 15 different occupations. His

identity card states he is a shop assistant. He receives an unemployment benefit of 22.000 francs. The mother earns 17.000 francs washing dishes in a restaurant where she works three days a week.

Including family allowance, the monthly income is 45,000 francs. They pay 10,000 francs in rent. They live in a beautiful but very damp and isolated house in countryside. They spend a fortune on heating.

Social Security Services enrolled Ivo's father in a professional retraining course.

The family has financial problems mainly due to a lack of organisation regarding resources. When they have money, they spend it; when they don't, children often sleep at friends' houses, which solves the problem of dinner and breakfast the next day. Nobody really worries.

My visit occurs at a moment there is money... it was the beginning of the month. I am received like a king. A wonderful dinner. The father speaks, the mother agrees... overall a pleasant atmosphere.

Ivo was always very bright... a little difficult, but bright. He went to preschool when his brother was born. There were no problems. Ivo liked and still likes his brother very much. In first grade there were no problems either... he learned well and liked going to school.

That year a sister was born. The parents were very happy. The girl is very spoiled by her father, who always wanted a daughter.

Ivo moves up to the second grade, seemingly without

problems. His first report bulletin of the year: all negative. His parents become worried and seek out the teacher. He says that Ivo knows nothing: he can't read or write, and he's weak in math. According to the teacher, Ivo memorised the first-grade reading book, thus deceiving the teacher. He adds that this wasn't a cause for concern, since many do the same as Ivo. The report bulletin was just a reminder from his parents, as Ivo seemed intelligent and would surely improve.

But that didn't happen. At the end of the year, the teacher would report, "You're far behind the class average." And he advised the school's Special Education Department, something the parents rejected.

Meanwhile, in the neighbourhood where they lived at the time, an anti-authoritarian school was started. They decided to enrol Ivo, convinced that in a less repressive environment, he would regain interest in school. The teacher[23] liked Ivo – his father said – but even so, Ivo didn't like school. He often came home crying.

At the end of the year, the anti-authoritarian school changes teachers. Ivo's father had many doubts, but since he couldn't return to his previous school except for the Special Education section, Ivo ends up in my class.

The teacher from the previous year.

I managed to speak with Ivo's former teacher a few days

[23] ...who worked part-time, with the other half-time being provided by a group of parents.

before she moved to a different area. She remembered Ivo very well; to her, he had always been a little boy with a few minor problems.

In the few moments he was in the room, she tried to get him to work. While the others went there to do their little tasks, she prepared some special worksheets for little Ivo. She also had the impression that the others didn't like him very much. Sometimes they were quite aggressive towards him.

Finally, the colleague asked a psychologist friend to observe the little boy.

The observation didn’t reveal anything in particular... however, the friend thought there was a strong communication barrier between Ivo and the group.

No, throughout the entire year, Ivo didn't write any short texts. In the end-of-year play, he played the role of a very funny little clown because the teacher insisted to do so.

My interschool correspondent.

I discuss all of this with my colleague, with whom we have a school correspondence, and who has many years of experience.

- Well, your boy already has a very long history.
- Yes, but what worries me is that you keep losing interest constantly...
- How long has he been in your classroom?
- I know... 2 months...
- With a past like that, he will be showing lack of interest

for still a while. Let it be. Don't worry, don't embarrass him. Your office seems to be working. Leave the boy alone. He already told things in the morning meetings, remember?

- But I'd like it to function at least minimally.
- You can't fix in a day what has been broken over so many years. You'll see that one day he will start working. Leave the boy alone if he doesn't ask you anything; worry, you and your colleague, about the classroom environment and the other 18.

5. The skull

Benoit is ill, and Ivo, on his daily walk around the room, lingers a good while in front of the display table rearranging the material. At the late afternoon meeting, Katrien asked where was the goat skull she had displayed on the table some time ago.

Day Responsible (D.R.): Does anyone know where Katrien's skull is?

...

D. R.: Benoit is ill, if not, we could ask him.

Anne: Ivo was setting the table.

Ivo: Yes.

Pascal: And you don't know anything about the goat skull?

Ivo: Katrien's skull? I know. It's right there.

He points to a box under the table, stands up, and takes out the skull that he will give to Katrien.

6. A crucial project.

It's the last week of November. During the Council, we're proposing new projects. Benoit wants to set up a project about autumn flowers.

Pascal: I think it's wrong to start a project about autumn flowers now! Projects should only begin next week, and by then there won't be any flowers left!

Benoit: I saw flowers in the woods just yesterday.

Pascal: There must be very few. I think you should choose another project.

President: Who wants to work with the flowers?

Five fingers stand up.

Benoit: We've had this project on hold for fifteen days now in the fridge[24]. It's not our fault that the other projects only finished now!

Pascal: Okay, let's try... But I have the right to suspend the project if there's a lack of materials.

At the next meeting, when we are drawing up the project contracts, Frederick says his mother can help. We call her and Ria confirms she is available to accompany the group to the woods to pick some flowers.

After the break, Ivo comes over to me:

- I also want to do that thing with the flowers.
- Ask Benoit. It's fine for me, he's in charge of the group.

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[24] The list where we write down topics to discuss is called the fridge: we keep the topics well stored, in a cool place. If they stay there for too long, it's probably because, after all, we weren't very interested in them.

- The group has already said I can.
- Then add your name to the contract.

The following Tuesday, the 6 children involved in the project go to look for flowers with the Ria. They return just as we are sitting in a circle to close the day. Ivo arrives soaked, with a red dead-nettle in his hand:

- I have a flower, I have a flower!

Ivo had fallen into the streamlet when picking the flower.

The next day, when the time allotted for project work begins, Ivo announces: "I'm going to draw my flower." Shortly after, I see him sitting on the mattress in the reading corner, looking very bored.

- So, have you drawn your flower yet?
- No, I did not. I can't.
- You can't? Then why?
- Leave me alone. You know I'm stupid.
- Show me what you've already done.

Ivo came to get the drawing from me. He was not able to draw the little flowers clustered around the stem. I help him draw circles. The result is an acceptable flower design. The next day, he brings me a small piece of paper.

- Look, I wrote a text. Can I read it?
- Of course.

The translated text would be approximately like this:

"This is a flower and it needs water. It lives in the woods. It lives a long time and the bee comes to this flower."

- Your text is beautiful.
- Can I paste it along with my drawing for the project?

- Sure, ask Benoit.
- On the day of the project presentation, Benoit shows Ivo's drawing and text, but Ivo is shy and doesn't want to speak.

7. An excursion and a free text.

Nothing happens with Ivo in January. It seems he forgot he was involved in a project. At the end of January, an idea emerges from a project about birds: why not organize a field trip to Zwin, a nature reserve on the Belgian coast? With a little help from our cooperative fund, we manage to go, each paying only 150 francs. Some mothers will participate and organise a picnic. Then, during the last week of February, on a beautiful sunny day, we are on the coast birdwatching. On the way back, the children are already writing free texts...

A week later, we chose texts for the class paper. There are many texts about our trip, one by Ivo:

“We went to Zwin. Ria came with us. We missed the train and got home very late. Our parents were waiting for us at the station.”

This text is chosen for the class paper by the entire class. The more descriptive texts are later incorporated into the project and sent to the correspondents. Ivo's text is collectively worked on and published in the class paper.

"We went to Zwin in the last week of February.
Ria, Greet, and Rita accompanied us.
We saw many birds and wrote texts about them.

We went for a walk by the sea.
On the way back, we missed the train and arrived late. Most of our parents were at the station waiting to take us home."

(Ivo, 9 years old)

Ivo typed part of the text and illustrated it.

8. The final period.

During the last period, Ivo "discovers" the working cards. He changes to orange for +/- and to yellow to x/:, while he starts, this time for real, reading books from the library, filling out forms with the help of the responsable.
By the end of the year he had made progress, more in reading than in math. Has he finally woken up?

9. To conclude.

The following year, Ivo is not with me... the classes are organized differently. I only work with 5th and 6th grade pupils. Sometimes I hear about him, sometimes he comes to visit us in our classroom.

- So, Ivo, everything alright?
- Yes. I'm in a hurry. We're doing a project on mushrooms. Do you have coloured pencils? We've lost the red one in our classroom.
- Go talk to Gwen, she's in charge of that kind of material.

Another year, and Ivo is back in my class. He seems happy. The first text chosen is his:

The Flying Cow.

Once upon a time, there was a cow that lived on a farm. She

slept very well every night and always flew to the meadow in the morning. One day, the cow ate the entire meadow.
The farmer arrived and when he saw this, he fainted; he saw the cow in the sky.
She flew very high, in the clouds.
She was going to the moon. But then she came back down, went into the moon shop, the shop owner almost fainted.
The cow said, "Give me a moon suit, how much is it?" "3,000,000,000 francs," said the shop owner, and she flew again to the sky. She arrived at the moon. She went for a walk; first she found a cave. She went to see inside: it was a beautiful cave.
So she decided: "This is where I'm going to live."
That night she had beautiful dreams. She dreamt of Mars. In the morning she got up and went to Mars. After two nights she arrived there.
She went to explore the surroundings: she found a precipice. She decided to descend the precipice. When she reached the bottom, she went to explore the surroundings again. She then found an even deeper precipice. She continued his walk, and after about two hours she found an even deeper precipice, and decided to sleep.
She got up, continued on, and a few hours later found the farm itself.

I have a vague idea that the text was followed by a comment offering some explanatory clues, which I used in a meeting about literacy teaching methodologies. I haven't found that comment

anymore; it must have disappeared when I moved to another country.
In any case, if the comment had the same characteristics as the text, not much was lost. It should only confirm a naive writing style, presenting classroom work as something natural, almost without the teacher's presence.

Correspondence

It was also with this group that I had my first experience with international correspondence, including an exchange visit. It was 1981. The school once more had been reorganised, and I was left with pupils from the 4th, 5th, and 6th grade groups. We had started an international correspondence with a class in Delft, Netherlands. The idea arose because in 1980, we created a teachers' association[25], in line with Freinetbeweging Nederland, with colleagues from AKO[26], and with some teachers who became frequent visitors to the De Appeltuin school.
At the invitation of the Dutch movement, we joined the International Movement of Modern Schools (FIMEM). At Easter 1981, we were at a FIMEM working meeting in Delft, and I met Ton, a young teacher like myself, with whom I got along well. Soon the idea arose to encourage our classes to exchange correspondence, also suggesting the possibility of holding a meeting.
The trip took place in the following school year, with a class of only

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[25] See above, Freinet Stichting Vlaanderen (FSV).

[26] Aktiegroep Kritisch Onderwijs, a group of teachers actively promoting institutional pedagogy between 1972 and 2002 in Flanders.

5th and 6th graders. It was December and it was snowing. The children spent the entire trip singing the repertoire we had learned the previous year and at the beginning of this year. Talking to the other passengers they met on the train they realised through the change in accents and dialects that we were moving away from home.

After passing Antwerp, everyone was upset because the snow obscured the border. I didn't immediately understand the connection, but some questions made me realise that some of the children were convinced the border was painted on the ground with lines and crosses, as it appears on atlas maps. I couldn't convince them otherwise. On the way back, there were places where the snow had disappeared and where it was possible to verify that there was indeed nothing painted on the ground near Roosendael. This was confirmed by our Dutch colleagues when they visited us after the Easter holidays.

After the first stop in the Netherlands, no one doubted that we were in another country. "They speak the same language but pronounce the words differently. And they say 'cute' for 'nice', for example," one of the children summarised in a free text.

The correspondents were waiting for us at the station. We walked to the school, which was very close by. Since it was Wednesday, a day when schools are closed in the afternoon, we mobilised the parents so that everyone would feel comfortable at the correspondent's house. Some families got together and provided a fun afternoon for the guests, a way to avoid potential homesickness issues.

The next two days were spent working on a joint project, during which the correspondents showed us the city of Delft. That night, I

got to know the city even better going around by bicycle, from house to house, because I had goodnight kisses to give.
Saturday afternoon, on the return trip, we started making a list of things we had forgotten, to see if the correspondents would bring them in May, when they came for the return visit.
This first experience of inter-school and international correspondence, very much in the style of the experience of colleagues in the institutional pedagogy group, enchanted me. It would later influence me in Portugal, to organise two international meetings resulting from the inter-school correspondence.

The Portuguese period

Between schools, children and teachers – part 2

I

I saw Oury for the last time in the autumn of 1984 at a meeting to promote the FSV, in Ghent: "They say I'm old-fashioned because I still carry my printing press under my arm. But a printing press is not the same thing as a photocopier."
Two years later, and one year after attending the MEM Congress at the Paula Vicente school in Lisbon, I moved to Portugal with Clarisse. We came in a Volkswagen van, full of Inês (who was 8 months old), Inês's things, books and a bookshelf. Among many other people, I met Sérgio Niza. I sought to better understand the points of contact between Fernand and Sérgio, between the cooperative group work of MEM and the work of cooperative groups within the institutional pedagogy current of the Freinet

mouvement in France at the time. Meanwhile, I quickly began to understand the circumstances of working in Portuguese State schools, which were in no way comparable to those in Flanders. I started working as a pedagogical coordinator in a semi-private school. There I met another fascinating woman, Guida, It was she who introduced me in that semi-private school and who amazed me with the text work and projects she did with her students. I also liked to see how she led children evaluate a situation, problematise it, and then intervene in it. I wrote Oury about my adventures.
He replied: "It seems everything is going well. As for me, I have just made a sad discovery. Books also die. VPI[27] is out of print and no one seems interested in reprinting it. But you see that it is possible to chip stones. Of course, it is a lot easier when is done as a group."
Two years later, I'm back in a classroom, this time with Portuguese children, in the same semi-private school. I know João dos Santos' work, and I also know the work of the A-da-Beja school where Clarisse is part of a team and begins her work with profoundly deaf children and adults. She tells me some stories the deaf monitor tells her. She works with him and he is the one teaching her sign language. She shows me more clearly the reality of one kind of exclusion. Exclusion exists simply because someone is deviating from a norm. In the world around me not only relationships between people seem to be driven by norms and normalisation bur also physical differences. Meeting someone 'different' seems to vanish in lots of people the desire to get to know the other person, to engage with them.

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[27] Oury, Fernand & Vasquez, Aida (1967).

Meanwhile, the computer enters the room. I learn to work with it, and I get the impression that if the photocopier isn't the answer to the printing press, digital word processing can be a good substitute, also in conceptual terms. Teamwork in writing is present and facilitated. I write this to Oury, who doesn't reply directly but I receive a postcard in my mailbox with an alert to pick up a package at the post office. A small gift: the book *Institutional Pedagogy* by Matrice publishing house. With a request to promote the book and the announcement that VPI will be reissued by the same publisher. The new book makes me rediscover some monographs I already knew, as the one with the title *Claude's story: closing to open.*

The work with the computer doesn't stop, and I have new adventures with a small team and the children I'm working with at school: we build objects in Logo and program them[28]. There's a new circle of weekend conversations that extend into the night, during the meetings organised by the Minerva project. Little by little we are realising the different needed approach by children and by adult-teachers when facing problems due to logical procedures that are initially unknown to both teachers and children.

II

I spent part of 1989 and 1990 on international correspondence between my class and a Belgian class from the Appeltuin. This correspondence involved a journey in Leuven by the Portuguese group to meet the Belgian group and also visit cities such as Bruges, Brussels, and the North Sea coast. The following school year, it was

[28] See Nunes, Fernando & Paulus, Pascal (1990).

the Belgian classmates' turn to visit the Portuguese group, taking the opportunity to explore Lisbon, Cascais, and Sintra, as well as the beaches of the Atlantic Ocean. This exchange of correspondence, in which all families actively participated, resulted in some friendships between adults and children, leading to other trips and reunions[29].

III

When I received the news of Oury's death in 1988, I had just started working in public education and working at the MEM Resource Center. I was preparing my move to the Outurela and Portela school[30].

Meanwhile, I had embarked on a new activity some years earlier: training teachers in the field of mathematics didactics, largely at the invitation of two friends managing the training centre of the Irene Lisboa Institute. This required me to read and reread everything that existed on the experimental didactics of mathematics. A four-hour layover at Paris airport, on a trip to Corsica, and a friend who insisted on having breakfast on Boulevard Saint Michel, led me to discover Vergnaud's work when I entered the *Gibert Jeune* bookstore, right in front of the since 1968 well-known fountain. When, a few years later, on another flight, this time to the Azores, I had a long conversation with Leonor Filipe, I also discovered Brun and Glaeser. It was one of those occasions one could wish the

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[29] In 2026 I discovered that Maya, one of the teachers at Appeltuin at the time and where I had taken some Portuguese colleagues, remembered Dora Agostinho perfectly. It was then her first year working at the school where I had my classroom, Maya was one of the Belgian children who visited us...

[30] See next chapter: *Grandi i Pikinote*.

Azores somewhere on the other side of the planet, just to increase flight time. I only spoke to Leonor once, but it felt like I spent much more time with her.
The training workshops and study circles that I started afterwards would be heavily influenced by this experimental approach for teaching mathematics.
Just before leaving the Resource Center to begin my new adventure with children from Outurela and Portela, I received Jean Houssaye's book, in which António Nóvoa describes Sérgio Niza and Paulo Freire, while Fernand Oury is described by two Belgian teachers, Pourtois and Desmet. I see with some pleasure that I worked or still work with two of them, and that another was very important to me the first time I left primary school. It made me want to get to know the others as well.

Again, on the other side of some mirror.

Before describing my adventures in Outurela, I should mention that in 1993, when I already settled for some time in Portugal, I left school again, now with the name of first cycle of basic education in stead of primary school. It was a somewhat not very well thought out spontaneous act at the end of my work with a first-grade class that included my daughter Inês. She herself decided that year to call me Pascal, like the other children in the classroom, changing to "Dad" as soon as we were heading home, in a clear demonstration of separating roles.
I decided to pick up the job offering page from the newspaper *Expresso* and responded to various recruiting advertisements, just to see what would happen. The first EU support framework was up

and running, the second was just beginning to take shape, and there was plenty of money for education and training activities.
That is how I found a group of people in the SEIES cooperative, which I quickly joined. The educational work was fascinating: I was part of a team working with women who wanted to outline new life projects, in some cases to test the viability of their idea of little entrepreneurs activities, in others to intervene with them and invest in their local environment. Later, I would also experience trainer training the learners not being teachers by profession.
The point of contact was institutional pedagogy and institutional analysis. I quickly realised that institutional analysis wasn't reserved to trainers. I noticed that our learners were transmitting valuable information about the female employees of various institutions and how or when to approach them to obtain the most of benefits or promotions. This analysis even allowed the development of strategies, either for survival or exploitation. It also clearly sensed their anger towards the school that had let them down.
I wrote it all to Créteil and received a reply: "Hi, it seems you're enjoying life. Things aren't going so well here. I practically never leave the house anymore. Your stories are interesting. Be careful with institutional analysis and theory, Lobrot and others. Keep telling what you did, and only what you did."
That would be the last time I heard personally something form the *barracks bear*[31] A practitioner who theorised, who set me on the

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31 l'*Ours des casernes*. That was what Oury was called among his colleagues, combining his imposing physique with the title of one of his books, *Chronique de l'école caserne*.

path of theorising, but meawhile distrusted 'theorists' so much that he caused a separation within the institutional pedagogy group long ago.

There was not to worry too much about the dangers of theory stripped of practice. At SEIES I know José Hipólito[32], a connoisseur of realities, a storyteller, an analyst of situations, always very critical. It was hours of work with him plus hours of conversations about our work with women, about the school, about utopias where people occupy a central place.

In 2026 I'am still linked to the SEIES cooperative where I worked for 4 years. It was a very enriching period about understanding training, where I started to see how to synthesise information: it should be possible to guide adults and children through the same process to promote their learning. Building a pedagogical context, an Intermediate Cultural Space as Patrice Lorrot explained to me. Managing this space setter up among learners following certain rules, one of which is not to lose sight of the role of the facilitator when holding formal responsibility for the action. A place and time for encounter can be created where transformation occurs. As soon as some group members begin their reflection, one can provoke, question, and help synthesising so that the context enriches for every learner in the group.

Old conversations that lead to new conversations.

The time for conversations with Leo Michielsen and Fernand Oury is long gone now.

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[32] Ver Santos, José Hipólito dos (2003).

Alongside the conversations at MEM and SEIES, there are other conversations in which I am a listener, or rather, a reader-listener.
At the start, leaving Belgium with baby Inês, I haven't had much time to update my library.
At SEIES, with some periods of less work for clients and while awaiting the start of two important projects, I could afford the luxury of revisiting Struik, Asimov, and other classics of science popularisation, such as Hawkins and Sagan. But I also get to know other authors, from the time I spend in the bookstore at the Irene Lisboa Institute, waiting for the arrival of the learning groups for the first mathematics courses I organise. I encounter John Allen Paulos, Stella Baruk, ...
Then, suddenly, a new circle opens with Albert Jacquard. He leads me to his own books, but also to Charpak's books. I meet Bento Jesus Caraça and then his son at the *Lisbon Group* through an article by Ricardo Petrella. Meanwhile, I listen Guita Pessis-Pasternak and Feyerabend shaking up Descartes and Rousseau. At the cooperative, I encounter Jean-Marie Barbier, Bertrand Schwartz, and René Dumont through their books.
They help me to create a new synthesis regarding training and social intervention.
The desire to intervene is even clear and very visible to Inês now 13 years old. Seeing me gathering the materials for to organise classroom work to start in Outurela, she asks me: "Dad, are you going to work with your students like you used to work with us?"
To which I reply: "Oh, Inês, that's the only way I know how to work."
She looked at me with some concern: "Oh, Dad, it's just that school is not what you think it is..."

My youngest daughter, Sara, had a spectacular preschool teacher, Ana Amália, who invited parents to visit the classroom and do activities with the children. Once I went to make pancakes, another time I brought my guitar and sang songs with them. Sara was radiant, obviously. I saw videos of the other children just as radiant as Sara when their father or mother came over. When Sara entered the first grade, she could read and write. But the teacher didn't believe it[33]. Sara confided, during a session of dreaded homework: "Oh, the teacher will never learn the 'r'." "Why, Sara?" "Then I will be allowed to write 'car' instead of 'popó' (a nursery term for car)." Sara understood what many teachers don't.

I became a visiting parent again when Sara was in the fourth grade, at a trusted school, with an old friend from the past as her teacher. She invited me to work on math problems with her class. A notebook was created from that work[34].

Regarding this journey up to 1999

Through accumulated experience, I have adopted a formative approach where learners are setting up their own learning process, working in a group, negotiating and discussing. I refuse to develop any work model in which interaction with the group does not occupy an important place. I see working with children or adults in the same way when it is to better appropriate the world of ideas

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[33] As if he perception of what children know were a matter of believing rather than observation...

[34] Available at https://sites.google.com/view/pepepascal/more-writing/nonfiction. Documento em PDF

and knowledge, so they can enter it and enrich it with their own ideas and knowledge. Guiding learners in this process of internalisation and externalisation seems to me to be my role as an educator. The school has certainly adulterated this role. *E-ducere* (to raise out of oneself) has been degraded to *educare* (to nourish)[35]. In school, *"as the Cro-Magnon of pedagogy, we tirelessly carve our flint tools, which may serve others"*[36].

In 1999, I had some hope of having passed the stage of Cro-Magnon for Homo sapiens Habilis. Some of the tools could be perhaps handed over to those who might use them at their turn as trainers/educators. But perhaps I was mistaken: as an educator, I spent very little time with the people who, by chance or by choice (in less institutional contexts), became momentarily learners with me. They, like me, will certainly be formed from other, equally important influences, often without being able to clearly indicate these formative moments, because they are non-formal or informal. But everyone is able to periodically take stock, building reference memories (Josso, 2002).

Moments that leave a mark

To conclude this "pre-Outurela" section, I'll share what, in my opinion, are the key memories and references that led me to choose the Outurela school to begin a new chapter.

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[35] Jacquard, Albert (1991: 179).

[36] Oury, Fernand & Vasquez, Aida (1977) (page 65 in portuguese version).

Regarding isomorphism

Among the moments cited as moments of learning and change, there are those that relate what is happening in the classroom and in training groups to what is happening in my own training as a teacher.
These appear to be key moments in becoming aware of isomorphism.

Regarding people-centred training

Even though family appears to be important, even in the choice of profession, there is in fact a great deal of autonomy that will support all subsequent learning and also reflection on how a person's formation takes place: encounters in social mouvements such as BJN, the cultural center project, FSV and MEM, informal groups, such as the translation group of Oury's book, and also in groups such as SEIES, which relates social intervention intersect with business activity.

Regarding my own learning

I would like to highlight the emphasis given to Fernand Oury.
There is a recognition of the master figure, in a person who is often not easy to work with, for whom intervention is paramount. A connection is made with Paulo Freire.
This also reveals a disillusionment with the international movement of modern school movements. In 1984, I ended a relationship with an organisation that seemed to me to be moving away from

awareness-raising work[37].

However, it is precisely when this connection seems to have little future that another reported moment occurs, which is undoubtedly a very important turning point. It will involve a change in professional activity, a new perspective on the role of educator, a new country and a new family, new friends and partners in the profession.

In several passages I try to highlight how affection and love for people are the driving force behind intervention and give direction to professional activity. Paulo Freire resembles this phrase from Ernesto Che Guevara: "*Let me tell you, at the risk of sounding ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is driven by strong feelings of love. It is impossible to imagine an authentic revolutionary without this quality.*"[38].

I don't consider my narrative to be that of a revolutionary, but it at least it gives a wink of it.

Guide to learn as guided as learner. A moment of reflection...

In this chapter, there are clear references to moments that were significant in the building up of my professional conscience, from a very early age, in which some experiences that we might consider negative became extremely significant in my own relationship with

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[37] Some things have perhaps changed in the evolution of the relationship between the mouvements that make up FIMEM and organise the RIDEF. Was I too impatient? I'm including some suggestions today in https://sites.google.com/view/pepepascal/interaction/learning-communities

[38] Freire, Paulo (1987: 80).

the children I work with. It's a worth saying *"Even in cases of coincidentally invested learning, this learning occurs 'without our knowing it', highlighting the difficulty in conceiving educational situations that are not parasitised by something other than what is intended to be developed. This raises the problem of identifying the 'unlearning' to be carried out and determining what was actually learned in the established training situation — facts that final assessment generally does not address."*[39].

I became involved in youth groups, political groups, or social mouvements, and I have been aware of political activities and interventions since a very young age.

However, the pursuit of different professional challenges kept me moving, and alert to other challenges. Paradoxically, because "*adult learners only conceive the recognition of acquired knowledge in the form that is familiar to them, the equivalences, and they want the matter resolved quickly, to settle it once and for all. In short, their habits of doing things, their frames of reference for thinking, make them unavailable, resistant, or defenceless towards new ways of doing things, towards working with other conceptual references, towards welcoming new ideas.*[40]."

I thought I was really ready to go back to class…

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[39] Josso, Marie-Christine (2002: 180).

[40] *Idem.*

Grandi i Pikinote

> *I'd like to introduce you to the ideal school, which for now only exists in my head.*
>
> *In this school, learners can be interested in all sorts of things, very different from one another. They have all the time in the world until they have to choose their own professional path. At the moment, they can continue to "grow mentally." Because they are taught not only math or grammar, but also freedom, curiosity, justice, and camaraderie. These qualities aren't taught with words; they need to be experienced in the classroom.*
>
> *Albert Jacquard.*

Captivated between Outurela and Portela

The logbook I wrote during my first year working at Outurela and Portela allowed me to focus in various ways on the story built by the group, between children and adults. They are two perspectives, two stories told here.

An initial, extensive account describes the not always easy relationship between teacher and children in this quest for construction.

The second, shorter piece, focuses on the curriculum and curricular learning, reporting on what the socio-centred pedagogical approach allows when maintaining a cultural space.

At the end of the chapter I make some personal remarks.

The story of a not always peaceful relationship.

This story has intentionally retained its original diary format, from which I have only removed the more bureaucratic entries related to school learning. Some references remain to help contextualise the relationship described. For obvious reasons, I have changed the children's names and adapted some more identifiable episodes.
The lexicon at the end of the book explains the more specific terms used here. Each of these words are marked with an asterisk (*) on its first appearance.

Because it is a recurring reference, I also present on the next page the grid that organises the colour belts. It is presented to children just like the belts in Judo or Karate, highlighting the fundamental point: whoever wins a belt, never loses it[1].
The criteria for behavioural belts were discussed jointly and underwent minor changes over the time we worked together. Those related to school learning were defined by me. Obviously, the belts are independent of each other.

[1] This has no relation what so ever to an in Portugese schools rather common "traffic light code" system, frequently used in first-cycle classrooms to assess behaviour without going through an in-depth discussion of its meaning. In that system, red is bad, of course...

colours	reading	writing	problems	behaviour	cards +\-, x, ÷
white	Read a few words.	Copy the template.	Participates sometimes in the discussion of a problem.	It forces Pascal to get up. the voice. It disrupts the work. from colleagues; He provokes his colleagues.	Test
yellow	Reads syllables and texts from the classroom.	Write sentences with someone's help.	Participate during "problem" times.	He sometimes obeys the team of the day or Pascal. Respect the decisions of the Council. He is able to listen during group activities.	
red	Read a fact sheet or a short text.	She writes short texts and makes spelling charts.	Solve worksheets from the problem file or notebook.	Ask to speak during group activities. Respect other people's belongings and the space in the room. Respect the signal to leave the room.	
green	Read a text and/or a book and complete the interpretatio n worksheet.	Write texts using word lists and index cards.	Knows how to use materials to solve a more difficult problem.	He always uses the newspaper to resolve a conflict. He works and moves around the room. without disturbing.	
blue	Read to the class.	Writes texts and makes language worksheets.	Knows and explains how to solve (part of) a problem.	It involves your tasks and responsibilities in the classroom. Works in small groups without conflict.	
brown	Read stories aloud during story time.	Take note of the Read, tell and show section and the council's decisions. Taking notes during a field trip.	Invent problematic situations. e resolve-as.	Organize a working group. Is your work up to date? and helps spontaneously the others.	

black	Read like an adult.	Write like an adult.	Explains and supports colleagues in solving problems.	Is to be considered an adult in the classroom.	

First term: a difficult start

On the very first day, after the Friday presentations, 9 children wanted to share news *: 'to tell their sentence', as they put it.
It seems they were trained to say the phrase to be dictated; it's almost impossible to have a normal conversation.
We worked on Soraia's phrase that same day. It was the starting point for the class paper*. They immediately said: 'We were going to do this with last year's teacher, but then we ran out of time. We made a book instead.'
The work went so-so.
On the 21st, the *book corner* It was invaded by most of the children, to play board games* which aren't very respected; this made me get worked up in the afternoon, and I lost control.
Starting on the 22nd, I began to propose some kind of routine: text work* in the morning, after news and organisation time. Then time for the individual work plan* until lunchtime. I gave them from the start a plan sheet for the week, which they filled out haphazardly, but which they religiously keep in a plastic bag labeled with their name, and later on with an internal order number. After lunch, things can vary it a little, but I still haven't found the right approach. The pupils can't handle too much work, especially individual work, but too much group work isn't good either.
Overall, they are not very autonomous. I thought it would be different after my last year's investment, when I remotely

monitored several classes at the school as teacher trainer, but in fact, it's noticeable that they are used to asking adults for everything and doing everything just for adults. Is that why it is also fun to disrupt the adult's organisation? Apparently, but partly: the workspaces are reasonably well-maintained and, apart from the pencils, little material is easily lost; the notebooks and folders hold up.

Day 23 (after three days of classes) went reasonably well... apart from Indira and Cláudia, who fight over everything and nothing, and Isaías and Fábio, who cause disruption, things are progressing. I'm trying to understand where the difficulties lie: Soraia, Adelino, and Isaías are very weak. Rodrigo and Sandro are blank. The handwritten script from the previous year didn't make things any easier. I went back to the use of not linked characters, to see who can keep up with me.

They are reasonable good with Cuisenaire rods*, but less one to another. Every movement in the room can result in a foot kick and start a veritable pitched battle.

They held their own at the first Council* for about 20 minutes, and were quite happy afterwards. I had to lighten the mood with a group drawing activity. Interestingly, it was raining torrentially that day, but there wasn't much disruption because of it.

Second week: from September 27th to October 1st, 1999.

The children were unable to evaluate their own individual work plan. I don't know if this has to do with me or with them. I handed in the plans organised and stapled together.

This week began the "madness" of little books: they staple two

white sheets of paper together with a coloured sheet in A5 format and "write" a "story." First for last year's teacher, then also for the class.
I insisted a lot on text and drawing, which has had varied results: Sátia, Jéssica, José, Cíntia, Rodrigo and a few others have some work completed.
Some children have started working with the cards*: Cíntia, Jéssica, Isaías, Mafalda — who draws beautiful birds — understood, but they still forget to mark what they did.
On Wednesday things went wrong: it wasn't possible to read a story, there was a lot of shouting in the room, and tidying up was a disaster. In the midst of all this chaos, Luís, Cíntia, the Rodrigos, Sandro, and Jessica worked well.
Indira is intensely drawn to the negative, and is perhaps the only one who isn't reliable in terms of removing, destroying, or hiding material. Today I managed to work a little with Sandro, although it seems to me like 'flog a dead horse': afterwards he can very well disappear for a week (which is what happened: a family wedding... one week).
On Thursday, I was happy: the day went very well. As Sátia said: Pascal wasn't very upset today.
Indeed: this is my biggest problem and my greatest concern at the moment: they can't hear anything, neither from me nor from others: when it comes to the news moment, it's torture to prevent them from speaking in pairs or in small groups. They clearly don't care; they're used someone will help them or explain things over and over again.
We were able to create a chart starting from the predictions

regarding the outcome of the legislative elections.
At the end of the day, I personally went to deliver our first correspondence, along with the respective comments, to the Voz do Operário school in Ajuda.
On Friday, the second Council: they accept the meeting and it is the second time I see them paying attention to each other for a short time (20, 25 minutes).
A lot of work has been done, but it's all costs lots of energy: booklets, cards, drawings are visible.
Several among them gave up halfway through a rather complicated mathematical puzzle (LOCO). Only Aida continued because I was supporting her. After the Council, they did drawings and played games; it didn't went too badly.

The week of October 6, 7 and 1/2 of October.

The third week isn't really a week: it's two and a half days long, because of the bank day of October 5th and the requisition at the end of te week to be the room for a polling station.
Wednesday started well and ended badly: Guida is unstable, Isaiah even more so. Fabio is going through difficult times, and Satia is a bit of a pest from time to time. They divert their work to construction, geoboards full of rubber bands without any design, while one or two books of some quality emerge. It's a worrying situation because it's provocative. The fact is they deny any good work. A beautiful final product achieved by one is mocked and belittled by the others. Perhaps they are afraid to show that they know how to work?
I still haven’t managed to get the time management working, nor

the task distribution. The teams* have mini-tasks. Is it me going slowly?

Thursday went wonderfully. The director and Indira's grandmother were amazed when they saw the whole group (only Andreia was missing) working at their workstations, alone or in small groups. I introduced fixed workstations to try to minimally control the organisation of the room. Now I'll think about discussing with them who would be responsible for each desk.

There's clearly more work being done at the moment. But there's also still, mainly on behalf of some of the boys, a tendency to play games without really following the rules. I have serious doubts about whether or not I should resort to coloured belts.

On Friday, we spent most of our time in the playground (replacing the blackboards). I watched them playing. After 30 minutes of a lot of noise and disturbance, they organised themselves: Sátia, Jéssica, and then Guida went to the class room, while the others played without major conflicts. Cláudia and Luís assumed leadership and were recognised in that role by the others.

It was interesting to record the development of their reactions throughout the day: during recess, several wanted to stay in the classroom working. After recess, when I suggested continuing to work until half an hour before the end of the day, at first they seemed bored. Soon after, some drop arms when I reminded them of the need to hold the Council meeting during the morning.

And the meeting went well until approximately 5 minutes before the end.

Bernardo directs a very strong criticism at Indira. "She kicked me my c... " he said. The generalised "Oh!" doesn't refer to the word used,

but to the location of the kick: you don't kick there.
I had little patience with Sátia and Luís.
In summary: out of 21 students, Indira, Cláudia, Sátia, Luís, and Fábio are the most difficult.

The week of October 11th

The week began with a half-day off for the students due to necessary 'cleaning' after election Sunday. In the afternoon I had many absentees, which complicated the organisation of the work, with consequences for the entire week.
The afternoon was mostly filled with planning work and went perfectly.
Tuesday morning was a disaster before recess. The group work (Indira's text enrichment) was a punishment. Shouting and pushing. As some finished, others started, and when recess time came, things were more or less sorted out.
Luís and Edmar fight violently, as do Fábio and Isaías. Sometimes Luís and Sátia don't work out either.
I was hoping at the beginning of the week that on Friday they would be the ones to organize and staple the work done to their plan, but no. Oh well.
Generally speaking, the more individual the work, the more quietly they work. They can't work together, in pairs or trios, much less listen to another one's thoughts.
I encouraged them to draw on large painting paper in pairs or trios, to see how they handle: they divide the sheet into parts, and each one takes their own part.
I have two very organized girls: Mafalda (Portuguese, white) and

Cíntia (Portuguese of Cape Verdean origin, mixed-race). Cíntia wanted to be put in charge of the archive, Mafalda of the library.
Following these proposals made at the Council, some children also asked for a task for themselves, and others, a responsibility*. I told them to write proposals at the class diary*. We'll see.
Regarding language and math content, we're taking it step by step. I've already managed to work with Rodrigo, Sandro, Soraia (who has trouble concentrating), and José. I have short sessions with the more advanced students in writing, and also short sessions with those who write stories and little books.
I am always needed for Computer work*. *Windows*® is too complicated for second-year students. It is counterproductive to have to constantly look at the computer and lab corner...
Wednesday and Thursday went well in terms of planning. The music segment on Wednesday morning was also somewhat successful.
Thursday's meeting with the parents was pleasant. They didn't ask many questions, but we had some dialogue about support (especially for Adelino, Fábio, and Andreia). I think the parents understood quite well the reason for not having homework. All 14 (out of 21) who were there responded positively to the suggestion of going to the theater.
Our first class paper has been published.
Great joy on Friday. The paper reading was successful, the problem is that nothing else was done collectively afterwards, except for the Council. And this week the meeting didn't go well. Sátia, Cláudia, José and Luís decided to position themselves in the opposition and that didn't help. I felt sorry for Edmar and Bernardo who tried so

hard to stay attentive.
José yells, not only when he wants to make people shut up, but mainly when he wants to physically control himself: it's either yelling or running and kicking.
The sale of the newspaper created some confusion. It will be necessary to keep track of money and remaining papers. Fábio thought the money from the sale was for him, and Cláudia was convinced that Fábio kept the money. But they gained strength to work for the next one, at least that's my impression.
Reading through the individual plans and notebooks reveals who is working hard. This week has some surprises: a lot of work from Indira (did she find someone to help her?), from Fábio as well, and less from others who usually do more (the girls are hungover...). The math session about the newspaper was good, and the work on politicians (election results) led to an interesting grid reading.
We have not yet received a response from the parties to our letter[2].
I decided to go back to using colour belts. The last time I used them was in what I thought to be a difficult 3rd grade class.
I really need some tool for them to more quickly understand where they are in relation to their learning. Right now, it's easier to read a colour level than to consult a long checklist.
I need to find ways to break the habits of shouting and talking loudly, and I also need to find ways to get individual work plan time "back on track."

[2] See below.

The week of October 18th to 22nd.

Monday went very badly. There was a lot of blackmail from side to side to get them to work.
Some arguments along the way, and some unconvincing classes.
Cláudia and Sátia were clearly provoking each other, while Indira fails to attract attention in a positive way. She's always picking on others and doesn't realise, or isn't interested in realising, that she's disruptive as soon as she gets up from her chair.
Isaiah and Fabio have very irregular work schedules, and often they don't work at all.
There are other small provocations of the type *'This school is no longer any good.'*, *'We have to work too much.*' and '*I don't do this'.* They destroy their own work when I want to value it.
The going to Quinta de Sales* went reasonably well, except for Indira and Isaías, who were also in stark opposition outside. The others liked the story about papyrus and parchment, but anything that takes more than 3 minute telling doesn't hold their attention.
The class paper sales brought in just over 2000 escudos. So the next one is paid. There are already 6 texts.
They are individualistic but don't want to do different jobs. They all want to do the same thing, so they can compare, tease, and provoke each other. José, Cláudia, Iolanda, Aida, and Luís are the experts.
Individualists (and here I mean individualists in general) are not at all interested in the discoveries of others, nor can they listen to them. In the classroom, asking to listen is met with threatening looks, raised asses, and shouting in the room. There is an extremely

short tolerance for change.
Self-evaluation is announced. It will be another struggle.
I have the impression that there is production, but it disappears amidst the constant disorganisation and destabilisation.
On Friday, the Voz do Operário school van came by with a delegation from the correspondents' class to deliver letters. The brave ones with big mouths were all walking behind my back, full of shame.
They showed us their classroom, amidst the hustle and bustle of Fábio and Isaías. They introduced themselves, exchanged a few words, and the delegation left.
Throughout the day, the correspondents were buzzing with writing and drawing. So much so, that it was completely impossible to hold the Council meeting. The disorganisation made it impossible.
I didn't dwell too much on the colours, but there were some attentive glances. Here too, the "traditional school" has left its mark. They know the green and red 'traffic light' dots. So I have to be careful.
They are really very angry with me because I don't photocopy forms for them to fill out. As Luís says: '*We are fed up with Pascal's old school; we want the modern school'.* We are in the revolt phase... and it often hurts.
After the initial enthusiasm for going to the theater, the parents have slowed down a bit. It will be necessary to reinforce the request. Probably through the children, who keep asking me questions about what it's like to go to the theater: if they'll be wearing masks, if they can bring snacks, if they'll be dancing.
The musical moments didn't go badly this week. We didn't go much beyond singing, but these are moments where there's a bit more

collective attention.

Monday, October 25th

The day starts well. The «news»-moment isn't very institutional. They tell things, some to me, others to friends. But that's how it works. I learn that Isaías from Guinea doesn't like Cláudia's brother's teacher: "He's a negro!" And he replies: "There aren't any here!" when I mention that there are many black teachers in the world.
The day's plan is in the teams' hands. There will be no setbacks throughout the week. We also begin our second week of weather tracking.
It's still very difficult to coordinate things. It's also almost impossible to work on a text or a story with the whole group. I'm aware that I'm seeking alliances with the leaders, granting small favours that don't always go unnoticed by others.
Individual work doesn't fail. There's still little mutual support, but Cláudia and Mafalda volunteer their help several times.
In the afternoon, we put together the birthday calendar, which turned out much better than I had anticipated. Several black children draw themselves as white, two white children draw themselves as black. Isaías identifies as black.

Tuesday, October 26th

A morning conversation, before class time, about Nelson Mandela, because of a mate named Nelson. Fábio, Cláudia, Jessica, and Sátia, who are listening, are quite impressed by the Apartheid system.
The day starts off badly. Indira is having one of her crises.
We work with Cuisenaire rods. Some children show great resistance

to working from a proposal on the board.
After recess we started reading the "*I am already able to*"* chart. The language remains very difficult for them. This year I will have to continue with these charts, but next year I have to be more careful with the copies I made of charts from colleagues who work in very different contexts.
In the afternoon, I can't get any organized teamwork going. The day ends up chaotic.

Wednesday, October 27th

I want to finalise the correspondence. I propose a written group work based on Sátia's text, followed by a correspondence work time. A little bit of wool that I brought for Sátia, as she needed 'hair' to glue a small picture for her, suddenly makes everyone want to make pictures with glued hair. Result: no evaluation, everyone is too busy.
Meanwhile, yesterday's «news» sparked the beginnings of some projects*: Luís on cars and Bernardo on Benfica's soccer team.
Adelino brings a pill bug into the classroom. Just another small project.
Using the worksheets a colleague gave me, and the suggestions about optical illusions from Nesquick®, I'm putting together a small card set of activities that I introduce in the classroom.
Indira is very destabilised and skips school at lunchtime.
We're working hard. It's agreed that the language assessment will take place on regular base at Thursday morning, right after the «news» moment.
In the afternoon they start "rehearsing." Math, music (cheesy songs), and dancing. Until mid-afternoon. Then everyone goes to

work on the plan.

Thursday, October 28th...

...the language assessment today is going smoothly. During recess there's a problem with school leavers that I discuss with them right after.
Luís shows a lot of interest in the computer, and he writes in the class diary that he wants to be responsible for it. I start training him for that.
Working with Cuisenaire rods is somewhat confusing. During independent study time*, things fall into place. I manage to make a very detailed list of the tasks that are to be done, and we manage to accomplish them quite well. Cláudia helps Adelino for a large part of the day, and Sátia works diligently on the computer helping her colleagues.
The afternoon scene is very similar to yesterday afternoon.

On Friday, October 29th...

...the day also starts more calmly. There is the possibility of proposing a small, more diverse task that can be included in the plan, and, after the break, introducing the plan evaluation. They seem to have adhered to it quite well. (MEM-colleague Lurdes Pequito told me recently that in her classes the plan evaluation usually went much better than the "assembly" itself, as the weekly meeting following the organisational review used to be called within the MEM until around 1991).
They listen to each other and discuss the value of work.
At the Council meeting, although they are quite attentive, they are

"machine-gunning" with their markers. An exchange of gestures between Luís and Cláudia causes her to storm out the door, sulking. Soon after Sátia follows. Jessica also stayed outside for a while to compose herself, accompanied by one of the educational assistants.

After the Council meeting, the afternoon is free. So, they play... school!! Cláudia hands out worksheets to fill in (perhaps to show me what school is like for them).

Luís' project work has progressed a bit, Bernardo's has too, and Adelino's is finished.

Luis learns more things on the computer.

Indira has a major meltdown; she violently attacks Iolanda, who then paints her backpack with chalk. The result: Indira's loud screaming continues until 3:20 PM.

The week's outcome isn't bad. Children did a lot of work, and their assessments were quite good. They remain extremely aggressive towards each other, and continue to become destabilised as soon as they realise there will be group activities. Cláudia sings loudly, Jessica refuses to sit down, Isaiah and Fabio hide under the table, a pencil flies, followed by another — in short, many funny things happen.

A the end Sátia comes to say that she'll miss me next week. A provocation or the start of a winning bet?

This week, we also received a response to our letters to the political parties. The response is from the PCP (Portuguese Communist Party) which the children immediately identified on the voting intention graph: it's the one we coloured yellow. "A small party," one said. “Carvalhas’ party [Carvalhas was the party leader at the time],”

said another. The response is affectionate, but it needs to be worked on to become more understandable for the children. A task to be done.
A major problem is that they don't identify with their work group or their place. They're always wandering around, destroying any sense of organisation. It was decided in the Council that from this week on there would be collective material for each group, but I don't know if it will work. I have my doubts, because of the "flying pencils".
For Luís' project, I got some documents from Mr. Boaventura, from the car office near the school. He said he would gladly give me everything, suggesting, with a laugh, that we just needed to work on the cars of the brand he represents.
Our visit to the theater is confirmed for November 17th.

Monday, November 8th

We'll see each other again after the autumn break. During the «news», with my first attempt at turning it into *Read, tell and show**, things are going badly. Seated in their places, nobody listens to anyone, as usual. I interrupt their attempts to tell their stories mid-process, which immediately provokes a violent reaction from Iolanda and Cláudia. It seems I chose a bad strategy.
After a conversation I had with my colleague Isabel, who is in charge of the library, Luís and Adelino disappeared towards the school library to work there in peace and quiet. This will be the case every afternoon this week, with obvious results: the car project is progressing. The research is almost complete, and they have a new challenge: they want to construct a car.
The others decide to play... school. The game involves about 15

from the class; some prefer to work without playing. But it’s fun to see how, little by little, the two "teachers," Sátia and Cláudia, introduce work proposals like I usually do. Perhaps they're not so much in opposition anymore? The work goes very well, and the "students" do all sorts of things. I have plenty of time to work with Cíntia and Edmar, who often shy away from these kinds of activities. Nobody gets angry while tidying up. A beautiful day at work.

Tuesday, November 9th

I'm introducing the math notebooks from *Raiz Editora*, conceived by Rosalina and Júlia (two very skilled MEM-colleagues). It's the usual success at the beginning. As always, they have to fill in 40 things at the same time, without doing anything special. Sátia is delighted, Cíntia too. Many people are picking up the notebook. Goodbye *Read, tell, read and show* today.

The day is going badly. There's no chance of us all working together, not even to proofread a text collectively. The second attempt at playing school goes badly (as often happens when there are reruns) and Cláudia argues with Sátia. This causes a conflict that is only resolved at the end of the day, but with a violent exchange of words between me and Sátia.

I'm pointing out that Cláudia and José might change their behaviour belt, which will cause the others to pay more attention to some of the information posters in the room, particularly those regarding the organisation.

I read the text of the legend of São Martinho [Saint Martin] with Cláudia and Bernardo, so that we could then rehearse for a kind of "tableau vivant". The rehearsal is scheduled for Wednesday.

At the end of the day I deliver the second package of correspondence to Voz do Operário. Professor Julieta, from the correspondence class, says that some of her pupils were a little scared by what they saw at our school when they went to deliver their first response.

Wednesday, November 10th

The day began with a reconciliation between Sátia and me.
I have 11 theater entrees paid. We rushed to correct a text by Soraia; I require some work on the text (answering questions), which is very rarely done. Before recess, some grabbed their work plan, starting independent study, while others are just killing time.
After recess, we tried to rehearse the legend. Bernardo and Cláudia chose Adelino and Luís as the beggar and the knight, Iolanda as the Sun, and Sátia wanted to be an angel. Cláudia got the role of God.
Twice it goes well, but the third time we already have problems.
After pacing back and forth, we decided to go back inside, and we'll see what happens next.
In the afternoon, they work in a more organized way, notebooks are still in vogue, painting is calling, Adelino and Luís are building their car in the library and only come to disrupt things at the end of the day, while others organize themselves for other work projects: six girls about Barbies, one with her *chef* doll, Rodrigo about animals, José about airplanes, and Aida about plants.

Thursday, November 11th

Saint Martin's Day celebration for the whole school. We reenacted the legend, with the same people in the same roles, except for

Adelino who is to shy and is replaced by Soraia, who doesn't know what she's doing and therefore isn't shy.
The "angel" Sátia forget to appear.
The rest of the day is spend with playing, eating chestnuts, painting, going in and out of the room.
In the afternoon there is big trouble with Isaías: he decided to throw stones at the maintenance men. A great commotion ensues.
Obviously, it's difficult to get it fixed.

Friday, November 12th

There is a moment of *read, tell and show.* Cláudia is going to read aloud a story she wrote. The others remain silent while she speaks. I don't know if that means they are listening. There are two other children presenting something.
During the planning phase, Cláudia immediately mentions that there's the meeting in the afternoon.
After organising the day, I can work with them for 20 minutes on the building of numbers*.
After the break, there's a short continuation of individual study work, there is the organising of the worksheets and the evaluation of the individual work plan. They have difficulty starting, but after a while everyone is engaged. José, who wasn't there last time, is a bit lost, some joke around, and Indira, who hadn't been too unpleasant until now, decides to throw her group into pandemonium.
In their assessment, Fábio, Isaías, and Adelino admit they did a poor job. Guida, Cláudia(?) and Sátia (who got tired of working) consider that they only did a so-so job — which perhaps means that I didn't quite understand what they were doing when I thought they were

working — and the others are very satisfied with their work.
The Council meeting, attended by the colleague who sometimes comes to help during periods of individual study, is going quite well.
Conflicts are at least handled in an original way: a strong request to be able to make fun of Indira leads to a vote on a rule that prohibits making fun of others. Indira, although supposedly protected by her white behaviour belt, breaks all records for unpopularity and is once again almost expelled from her group. She'll be working at a table alone, with me, until further notice.
The problem is she bothers the others anyhow, no matter where we put her...
Problems with Adelino (bathroom and playtime) lead to him being forbidden from going to the bathroom alone. Problems with Fábio and Isaías lead them to choose a responsible adult: Sátia will be assigned to Fábio, and Luís will support Isaías (which seems like a terrible choice to me).
The yellow behaviour belts are accepted for Cláudia and José, who thus pass. Let's see what challenges emerge.
The afternoon ends with free time (playing school, painting and drawing) and two violent fights: one between Adelino and Iolanda, which is resolved with playful teasing and kisses, and another between Jéssica and I don't know who, in which Jéssica throws a tantrum at me. When she tries to hit me, I anticipate her, immobilising her, and she gets furious. When she calls me a 'whore', I tell her she's mistaken, because I'm a boy. Furious, she leaves the classroom and I find her a little later in the principal's office, writing a letter to tell me she won't have any more fits of rage.
We ended the day with a big hug.

However, I had time to start the project with Rodrigo.
We are surprised by the doorbell, something that happens to us from time to time lately.
The plans reveal a great deal of individual effort. My biggest problem continues to be getting them interested in what others are doing.

Monday, November 15th

The day began with news from José about his cousin, whom he had gone to pick up in Ajuda and hadn't seen for 7 years (*sic!* He is 7), transformed in a text and a little book.
Bernardo also had something to say, but he gets lost in the disinterest of the others.
A new pupil arrived, Adilson, from Guinea, if I'm not mistaken.
The overview of the plans of last week was helpful, but creating new ones, not so much. I'll have to keep an eye on that tomorrow!
Before recess, we worked on a text by Adelino and Luís which, due to its very personal content, will not appear in the Class Paper.
The groups started the work assigned in their individual plans, without much enthusiasm, as always. Then they got involved and when the bell rang for recess, everyone was working, including Adelino and Fábio. The former was celebrating his birthday today and was overjoyed.
Cláudia and José are struggling to overcome their urge to hit and kick, but they're holding onto the yellow belt — for now...
Indira went to sit at a table alone, reluctantly, but respecting the Council's decision, asking for kisses now and then. I gave her a little extra attention during the day.
After recess, a group of girls went to the library to work with the

library teacher on their Barbie project.
Those who remained in the room (there seemed to be few, but there were still 14) worked reasonably well.
In the early afternoon, we worked on a section of the 'multiplication table by 3' using Cuisenaire rods.
Afterwards, Luís and Rodrigo painted, Sátia and Adilson worked on the computer, and there was a children's activity class led by Cláudia.
Sátia was preparing a spreadsheet on the computer to pass on to the others and then went to photocopy it.
Fabio needed the whole day to begin working on the building with the numbers.
At the end of the day we had a birthday cake made by Adelino's mother.

Tuesday, November 16th

Today we have a first-year student intern from Highschool in the class. Before recess, things are going great, but after recess it's worse.
In the afternoon, a group of girls goes to see Isabel, and the Barbies project is progressing.
We received a second letter from the politicians, which I can use to introduce the new topic of collective work: assessing the danger on the Portela road.
The collective work involved rereading the second issue of the class paper and selling it. There were fewer salespeople involved in the sale than with the first issue.
The writing process is slowing down. For the third issue of the

newspaper, there's only one text at the moment. The theater will probably further disrupt the pace of text editing. More individual work?
After recess we first had a Cuisenaire session in which some did not participate, including Adelino, Fábio and Soraia.
At the end of the day, there was a complicated situation because Cláudia (correctly) thought it was wrong we sent Aida to Oeiras to represent the school for something I did not understand what it was, without discussing it with the class. I explained that it was a last-minute situation in which I didn't have had the opportunity to intervene, but I had to call the School Principal to confirm what I said. Then they left calmer. The day was very productive.

Wednesday, November 17th

Everyone paid for the theater.
The morning went quite well: they put things on the table, everyone worked around the attendance chart for a good hour. After recess it was more complicated, because of the excitement of going to the theater.
Even so, cards were made for identification at the theater, and everyone was working... more or less. Cutouts are now in fashion.
I haven't yet seen if everyone had their plan in place. There were a few 'absentees' on Monday.
The trip to the theater went very well. No incidents. We arrived at two o'clock, and that was the worst part. Waiting is not their thing. There were some kicks and arguments during the waiting time.
But the attention during the theater performance was fantastic. They were very attentive, didn't make any sound, which sets them

apart from students at other schools and private colleges, some of whom were downright annoying.
Another example of exemplary behaviour: throughout the entire piece, they wanted to remain confined to their seats for almost the entire time, with only a few needing to use the bathroom or get to go to drink water.
The return trip went smoothly.

Thursday, November 18th

The *Read, tell and show* moment is starting to work. Cláudia already read a little book she had made, today Bernardo, Iolanda, and Indira spoke, and it was possible to hear everyone. For now, the conversation is very focused on me, while others aren't focused on me enough.
In the morning everyone started writing their comments about the theater, and then we listened to each other. Afterwards, we got the attendance sheet from last month. We did a count of absences, which wasn't easy at all, but we managed. After recess, the planning work was overtaken by the temptation of cutting and pasting.
In the afternoon, a big surprise: we do a text enrichment (Bernardo's text) and everyone participates. The discussion is quite organised. It's the third day in which there are many references to behaviour belts, especially those of others. Cláudia asks if Sátia couldn't turn yellow. The plan ends with practically the whole group doing a cut-and-paste job, but the aniline dyes become part of the story (mixtures with other colours and glue).

Friday, November 19th

In the morning we arranged to start the graphic book project recounting the theater. It's mostly about creating some panels that elaborate on the retelling of what we saw.
After half an hour, we have nine topics for nine panels.
Sátia gets furious because she doesn't want to work with one of the Rodrigos, and he had already chosen the final panel that she also wants: d'Artagnan's wedding. Only after recess she starts working with Jessica.
The children from the animals, plant, and airplane projects went to the library for the first time. The Barbies have already been there this week but will need a few more sessions. Meanwhile, a new group is being formed wanting to work on cell phones. It will consist of Luís, Sátia, Jéssica, and Fábio, who will be making his debut in project work.
In the afternoon, the Council meeting went very well. There were harsh (and justified) criticisms directed at José, who acted very aggressively this week. His behaviour was not forgiven by the others, and as a result, he has to remain seated for a week and is not allowed to make dislocations in the classroom. Indira returns to her place, but for now she also not may move around the room (and rightly so, she continues to be very dangerous in her movements, provoking and bumping into everyone in her path). Cláudia had suggested to me before the Council that we should change Sátia's behaviour color. As nothing was written in the class diary, I announced my intention to propose a yellow belt for Sátia and a red belt for Edmar. I suggested to the students that they pay

attention to the behaviour of both, to see if they can be promoted as belts are not taken back.
After the Council meeting, many returned to their work on the theater project, some finished their work in the library, and others took advantage of the interns' presence to do what they enjoy most: painting a commissioned drawing for an adult. I warned them that this type of work could only be done during their free afternoons.
The tidying up went very well.

Monday, November 22nd

The day started extremely calmly. I actually had to ask if they were already awake. The team prepared things quite well (and at first I thought it was a weak team, having Fábio and Isaías, who was away for several days). I introduced the idea of a *weekly plan** for the first time. I made a list of things to be done during the week, then to choose the priorities for each day with the children. *Read, tell and show* had some interesting information. Sátia announces that she has a new aunt at home. Maybe she gains some time to be just a child and rest from the house tasks. Jessica continues to be very kind to me. Cláudia is calm and attentive.
The Cuisenaire rod proposal, with numerical expressions as a backdrop (building 'trains' and controlling the relationship between two 'trains' of 'carriages'), works quite well.
After recess, the Barbie group disappears to the library and returns with a poster and a research proposal that Isabel (from the library) suggested they rewrite.
In the afternoon, there is text work. It's Rodrigo's text about his

grandfather, who raises animals. The tidying up goes smoothly. There's some difficulty with the clothes for the cardboard dolls that the Barbie project group is making.

Tuesday, November 23rd

The day starts a little more chaotic than yesterday. After a while things calm down and we do a good job on the building of numbers. They made a series of discoveries and discussed them amongst themselves for almost an hour!
After recess, José and Adelino (airplanes), Rodrigo (animals), and Aida, Mafalda, and Andreia (plants) went to the library to work with Isabel on their projects. They came excited and eager to continue working. The others had a fairly well-organised project, but also, with four interns, the executive colleague, and myself, it was almost one adult per child.
I allowed myself the luxury of sitting next to the computer and calling them one by one to go over the text about the theater. The *Barbies* created some 'schemes' to get around the work and started playing in the corner of the library, but after some observations, I considered that perhaps it wouldn't hurt for them to continue cutting out clothes. They work with axes of symmetry...
Fábio, Adelino, and Luís have all fallen for one of the interns. Let's see how they fare next week. Maybe I'll have to suggest more correspondence...
However, the three of them will present a great deal of work done this week. That's great!
In the afternoon, we only managed to do a reading and text correction (José's text), which was quite a lot of work, and I couldn't

even propose a worksheet. The puppets called, the cutouts and the painting too, and the day ended somewhat chaotically, with Adelino getting bored two or three times.
We quickly evaluate the work when already standing up for leaving the room at the end of the day.

Wednesday, November 24th

Today I had four interns in the room again. The day started very well. Good organisation by Mafalda, Adelino, and Luís (Rodrigo arrived later), followed by a good round of *news*. Cláudia announced her move to the Portela neighbourhood (and that she'll be living near the teacher...). She also announced that her father took her to school, something very rare. A long conversation ensued about the advantages of the new house, with a room just for her, since her brother moves around a lot when sleeping.
Bernardo's news about his upcoming birthday sparks a discussion about when he was born. He's turning seven and thinks he was born in 1995. After some discussion, Luís says it's 1992. No one doubts that 1992 + 7 equals 1999.
Following the *Read, tell and show* (There's more to tell than usual; I wonder if this isn't to camouflage other requests and other stories that haven't yet come to light) we picked up the Cuisenaire rods again.
The plan calls, even before recess, we finish typing the scripts on the computer. The puppets are calling too.
After recess, things get complicated. A violent outburst from Indira and José puts all the adults on edge. Things calm down around lunchtime. The reason? The *I'm already capable of* checklists. That

verification is hard work.
In the afternoon, things go better. Good proofreading work (Iolanda's text) and applied work. Rodrigo falls ill and complains of earaches. We are all a little worried, which means that at the end of the day we don't even remember to make the day evaluation.
Later in the afternoon, José becomes unbearable again.
The tidying up is a bit messy. On the other hand, we have the feeling that we worked incredibly hard today.

Thursday, November 25th

We started the day with a team neatly organising the files and notebooks: Cíntia, Andreia, and Iolanda.
We coordinated the work, and started with a round of things to talk about, in which Cláudia talked about new shoes, Adelino and Luís said they were going to appear on television, Bernardo got a real computer, and a few more of the usual stories about going to play at his cousins' house.
We read together the answers that the politicians gave us, that is, what the PCP and BE sent us.
Bernardo became very interested when I quoted the BE (Bloco de Esquerda - a left wing party) letter that says we are all political because we live in groups, in society. "So children are political too?" I picked up the letter again and read to them the passage where it says that if something is wrong at school and they try to change it, they are already doing politics. Some concluded: when we have our (Council) meeting, we are doing politics. I pushed it a little further: what if we thought about things that are wrong at school or around the school? The road quickly became a serious issue: they identified

the curve as the most dangerous part, the lack of pedestrian crossings, and the lack of sidewalks for pedestrians.
I proposed conducting a survey of schoolchildren who travel home by road.
The discussion is difficult to have because of the constant interruptions from the children who didn't ask to speak.
We stop and reviewed our individual work plans. The work is a bit chaotic, but by the time of the break, everyone is working.
They come back from recess quite agitated.
José and Adelino, Aida, Mafalda, and Andreia disappear towards the library with their projects. The rest goes on individual work, organised by the individual work plan, it went reasonably well. Luís, tired of working, asked if tomorrow we'd do that thing of 'complete, not complete, and I think I worked well'. When I confirm, he is overjoyed.
While I'm helping Guida fill out the *I'm already capable of* form, she turns to me and says, "We have our meeting tomorrow, right?" I confirm.
On the agenda with proposals for the Council, José proposes to be responsible for posting and reading the canteen menu, and Soraia wants to be responsible for the contents of the drawers.
We finished the morning with Luís and Adelino presenting their work on the cars. Luís presents, happy with his work but very embarrassed, and Cláudia has to boycott him. After a while, he improves... The part they present best is how they constructed the car itself. They remember exactly how they did it and where they got the materials.
The presentation ends with a great round of applause.

In the afternoon, the writing assignment is easy: everyone agrees on a rewriting proposal. Andreia does the work for Soraia (!) and I discover a few more things: Edmar and Aida write with much nicer handwriting than I thought, Isaías finishes the work in no time. It seems to me that Bernardo, Adelino, and Jessica are hiding their true abilities.
The tidying up is going better than yesterday. Apparently, Rodrigo is sick.

Friday, November 26th

A calm day. Only one argument with Iolanda that went wrong during the Council meeting.
The planning was very smooth with a team made up of Edmar, Adelino, and Luís, replacing José, who joined them when he arrived. They performed their roles reasonably well for the team.
The plan included some text work after a *Read, tell and show* session that took quite a while today: Cláudia with her adventures in her new house, Jessica, Soraia and Luís talking about their planned trip to Cape Verde during the Christmas holidays.
Sátia shows off some new earrings her father gave her after Cláudia introduces her, because she was too shy to say it herself. There is still an aunt at home. In fact, she is less aggressive.
Next, the text improvement around Adelino's text was very funny. It started with one of those usual phrases, about going to his aunt's house for ice cream. The additions gave Adelino the opportunity to enrich it with what he doesn't yet know how to write: his baby cousin bit his cheek thinking it was a pacifier.
The plan is off to a good start: the group continues working in a very

organized manner. I haven't been able to finish any more *I'm already capable of grids*, because in the meantime there's been an awakening to the planning of cubes and parallelepipeds. They make dice and little boxes to store them and I have to prepare the fold lines with a craft knife.

The 'Barbies' didn't complain about Isabel not being able to be with them in the library. Fábio stubbornly refused to work, Isaías worked well, and Luís continues to be a 'high-speed train'.

When evaluating the planned work, they continue to respect the rules. They don't make invent, except for Soraia, who thought she had worked too hard.

In the afternoon, the Council meeting was very harsh with José. He actually abused his power quite a bit, using rude language constantly, picking fights with everyone, and kicking left and right. The yellow statute that obliges him to remember and respect the rules is now punishing him. He will have to work in isolation from the group, only being able to work in one place, with Luís responsible for him. The children tried to make him invisible, but I have some doubts that this will work. I didn't object though. It is not to voodoo him, but just to see if the weight of the group is already working, and if it works better than the weight of the teacher. Bernardo, Luís, Sátia, and Soraia had well organised interventions, and the proposal for his removal came from Bernardo, who later forgave two other rule transgressions.

The other criticisms were also all resolved with pardons and applause.

Meanwhile, Iolanda decided to mock the intern Inês to such an extent that I felt it necessary to intervene, which provoked a heated

discussion and an even bigger fight from Iolanda.
Regarding the proposals, something predictable happened: José who was just isolated but who had offered to be responsible for the menu is not accepted, and the responsibility goes to Iolanda. Indira's proposal to be responsible for the cut paper drawer generates strong opposition from the leaders. I cast my quality vote, given the 9-9 tie. I intervened for Soraia, who coveted responsibility for the scissors and is violently criticised by the *Cape Verdean clan*. I asked for justification for the negative votes, and they replied with *'she's a baby'*. I argued that she proposed herself for a task worthy of her, and that she wasn't, therefore, such a baby after all.
Edmar received the red behaviour belt and Sátia the yellow one. They were both very happy, although I have some doubts about Sátia's behaviour. But the ceremony of sticking on the red and yellow sticker circles, with a handshake, brought out some radiant faces...
After the Council meeting, we went to play in the "sports field" with small balls (we played some skill games) and ropes. Of course, there were at least six conflicts, but they passed quickly.
In the late afternoon, Bernardo's mother appeared and offered us a birthday cake. We sang *Happy Birthday* we sang our self invented song *Monday.* Cintia asked me to sing *A Fisga* [a popular ironic song about school] and I was surprised that many of them still knew the first verses. In fact, Fábio suggested we restart our musical moments. I promised to do so.
Apparently, they are growing a little.

Monday, November 29th

Today, the group was rather excited. Luís, Adelino, Edmar, Indira, Soraia, Bernardo, and Andreia frequent a neighbourhood after school play center, and they received an invitation from SIC [a private Portuguese television channel with had nearby studios at the time] to go to the television studio to watch the recording of a Christmas program. They were very excited...

Furthermore, Mafalda and Aida announce that they will be leaving early in the afternoon, and in the middle of all this, Sandro appears screaming and kicking, with his mother hitting him violently. A day that begins quite peacefully...

The planning started with great difficulty: *Read, tell and show*, text work, independent study work. We decided to include work collective work and take up the class newspaper. I also insisted on finishing the drawings from the trip to the theater.

The *Read, tell and show* segment is extended: Cláudia and her house, Indira and her uncle, Adilson for the first time (which is good, because in the afternoon he doesn't remember what he wanted to write in the 'text' (just letters) I have of him, and we picked up today's news, Bernardo and his Segadrive, Mafalda and Sandro went to the Aki-store. Even two of Tarzan's elephants appear...

Of the things to be done collectively, we first take up the work about the road. Victory! I explained how they had to present the research to the others when filling out our class's form proposals. We discussed our outings again and noted the times, we made a scheme on the blackboard... which I later erased without first transferring it to paper. Morning break.

After recess, Daniela[3] works with Sandro. He copies words, draws, and cuts out a sentence: *I went to the Continent-store*. *Sandro*. All proud, he comes to show me he knows how to read this. I excuse him from the afternoon's group writing assignment so he can illustrate his own text. The work is going very well. He draws, paints, and copies more words.

The others struggle to start. They sometimes forget that José works independently, as decided by the Council. Guida reminds them that he's a 'ghost mate'. Carla and Mafalda, from another teacher, show up and stay in the room working with the geoboard and the computer, then they write a little book. In the afternoon, Carla helps tidy up and clean. She's already well 'integrated' as her teacher is regularly absent...

The 'Barbies' disappear to the library, only to return with a large collection of various types of Barbies and games, with cutouts and collages complemented by drawings. It happens to be a set of interesting works so I propose keeping them separated booklet for the overall project book. They agree with great enthusiasm.

At noon, "the glorious 7" leave, and the others grumble a bit. Fabio wants to go home right away. But then he stays.

The classroom seems very empty. Adilson's text doesn't need much arrangement. We do a verb hunt and fill in the text.

Next, the room empties completely: in pairs or threes, they walk around the school to find out how many students are going home via Portela road. Fábio initially doesn't want to (he says he's

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[3] Colleague, vice-president of the School Board, who distributes her school schedule in collaborations with interested colleagues.

embarrassed), but then he finds it fun.
In 15 minutes we collected the information from the regular classes and the afternoon double-shift classes. Tomorrow we will collect the remaining 4 from the morning-shift classes.
For the rest of the afternoon, the plan is mainly filled with clippings and collages, drawings, and finishing some panels about the theater.

Tuesday, November 30th

The day started a little chaotically. "The glorious 7" who went to the recording have great stories: it was very good, it was at the Maria Matos theater, it was with clowns — not very funny, according to Luís — and then came the reward for enduring so much screaming: a Santa Claus handing out toy car tracks and Barbies.
The work is very difficult to start with, a lot of *Read, tell and show*: Fábio is going to see the new house, Jessica is going to Caxias (prison?), Cláudia talks again about her house, Bernardo talks about an uncle who came, Soraia talks about an aunt, in short, the news of every day and all of it important.
Indira is making things impossible today. She really seems to be the reincarnation of *Tulius Detritus* from the album *Asterix and the Roman Agent*. The simple fact to be present is enough to cause problems. She doesn't even have to do anything. The worst is she often reinforces the situation...
In the morning we managed to work on Guida's text. The questions about the text present difficulties. They usually disguise them behind 'I don't know', so they don't have to read the text properly, even though they managed to identify the words in the previous task.

We've begun an extended time of workshops*, because there's so much to do: there are the records about the theater, the newspaper, the projects about plants and airplanes, the Portela road usage survey, the computer work, the paintings, etc.
At lunchtime, I heard that the mother of one of the Rodrigos suddenly transferred her son to another school without saying anything. She moved house, to Algés. She didn't even try to resolve the scheduling issue with the after-school program. No good morning or good afternoon. For certain parents, school is exactly as it usually presents itself: no more than a repository for children.
Goodbye Rodrigo, I hope you survive in the jungle, after giving you a new desire to work (it was a 2-month investment, for you to start unlocking the ghosts of school, and now I didn't even have time to help you with the transfer). Goodbye also, unfinished project about animals. Actually, it's not just some politicians who don't respect children. There are mothers, apparently...
As a counterpoint, Sandro returned, eager to work.
In the afternoon, Cláudia decides, without planning, to "play school" again. It ends well, because she puts a dozen of them to work on work cards, while others are in the library, on the computer, doing cut-and-paste, painting, and drawing.
Indira continues with her tantrums and shouting, and José is very upset because he can't enjoy his usual freedom.
Let's hope that this time he learns what it means to have a yellow belt. Sátia is very respectful, Cláudia is making great efforts. Luís was very disruptive, but he remains white belt. He got tired of the responsibility of the computer. Adelino is working better, Fábio has a relapse. José, Edmar, Cíntia, Cláudia, Sátia, Mafalda and Guida

worked well and with enthusiasm.
There is some progress amidst the apparent disorganisation, the shouting that can still be heard from time to time, my outbursts, today more visible in the mornings, in short, some difficulties that arise and colleagues attribute to the rain, the bad weather, the approaching Christmas and the fact that they come from where they come from... I begun to perceive some latent racism in some colleagues.
We ended beautifully: I taught the song *Kumbaya, my lord* and I had immediate success with the homemade translation into Portuguese.
We didn't have time for proper cleaning up for day evaluation, but the room was quite tidy when we left the classroom.

Thursday, December 2nd

A day that begins with few students in the classroom. By 10 o'clock, almost everyone is there. Lots of *Read, tell and show* about Christmas trees. Indira will spend the whole day not doing her work, greatly disturbing the others. After recess, the 'Barbies' go to the library and bring back the beginning of the final book. The theater paintings are practically finished. The class newspaper is completely illustrated, and Soraia and Mafalda contribute their opinions on theater in it. The work managed by the individual plan goes well, except for Adelino, who acts like a baby again, and José, who seems rather conflicting.
In the afternoon, we analysed the data from the children traveling

along the Portela road[4]. It starts well, but Aida manages to destabilise her group, so almost the entire group — Cláudia, Sátia, Jessica, and Aida — joined in, and it's difficult to control the 'bunch of kids'.
When I feel that the work is escaping the attention of many of them, I require written answers to several questions. At first there is outrage, then they calm down and see the fairness of my proposal. After all, this makes it easier to understand what there is to observe. And most don't have much difficulty finding data within a two-entry table.
In the late afternoon there's work we had initially planned for, but we didn't have time to go out singing what we also planned. Anyhow, the day went quite well.

Friday, December 3rd

The day went very well today, apart from a small squabble with José and Adelino. In *Read, tell and show* they are more willing to listen to each other and some stories about the house. The Christmas tree and the first presents are receiving a lot of attention.
Next, we will work with Cuisenaire rods.
The plan is going well. Everyone, except Soraia, is working, although some are doing lighter tasks: geoboard, dominoes, puzzles, etc.
When I ask them to arrange and staple their work to the plan, things go quite well. Fifteen minutes later we manage to evaluate the weekly work. It's interesting to see the seriousness with which the most diligent workers evaluate their work: the "so-so" or "bad"

[4] See further: *The Portela Road*.

ones are usually just that. Only Isaiah, who worked very hard, doesn't recognise his good work, just like Sandro. But the latter wrote a plan for the first time, so he yet doesn't even know what he's talking about.

Actually, Sandro's relationship with the others is a bit complicated. Cláudia definitely has racist tendencies towards him, and the others often avoid him.

The afternoon meeting was astonishing: for 30 minutes, no one was heard except the person who had asked to speak. I couldn't believe it and didn't quite understand the reason for this sudden discipline.

Very calmly and with applause, José is reinstated to the group. Indira is excluded again; I'm put in charge of her. Perhaps that's why José's reinstatement was so peaceful: Indira crossed all the lines this week and is suffering the consequences. What no one forgives her is the destruction of two pairs of scissors. Even so, I have my idea: this happens exactly the week that Soraia became responsible for the class scissors, despite opposition from many.

In the diary, there is a first "congratulations" written by a child: Guida congratulated Cláudia because she gave her a sheet of paper. Among the proposals, there is also one from a child: José's proposal to reintegrate his group.

Overall, an interesting council. We still have few rules regarding shouting and kicking, but there is progress. Let's see how things go as we get closer to Christmas...

After the Council meeting, 'the Barbies' finish their work, and the others embark on a Christmas mural. They make cutouts and collages for a large backdrop, overcoming various trials and

difficulties, but we'll gradually build something together – something that hasn't happened in a long time.
A much less tiring end to the week than start of the same week.
Life, after all, sometimes is beautiful.

Monday, December 6th

Before entering at nine o'clock we talked about *Sara Tavares* and *Mi ma bô*, we talked about Creole, about Flemish, we exchanged words, while Mafalda and Adelino organized the day (Adilson arrived late and didn't participate in the team).
Then we have a long *Read, tell and show*. It goes quite well.
Working with a text by Sátia leads to interpretation questions, which they continue to have difficulty answering.
The work, guided by the plan, begins without major difficulties. Aida, Mafalda, José, and Adelino go to the library to work on their projects, and only return close to lunchtime.
I have a heated argument with Jessica after recess about chores and organising the day, because of a snide remark she makes when I remind her that painting and cutting are done in the afternoon. Daniela is a valuable support in stabilising the situation.
The rest of the morning goes well, and by lunchtime everyone is happy and smiling.
After lunch we interpreted our weather observations charts for October and November. Guida is very attentive, after everyone helped to fill in the general maps. She is the one who discovers why there are days with nothing marked (weekends) and she also discovers that the temperature in the room is always higher the than outside one.

Luís initially has doubts, he double checks.
It is once more Guida who discovers why the room temperature rose so much after a very cold day: we turned on the heaters.
They are a little confused because the rainy days in October were warmer than the sunny days in November. We tentatively accept that November is closer to winter than October. They still don't connect the moment of recording with the temperature: We see the outside thermometer in the morning, before the sun gets hot.
The panel about Christmas is very 'anarchist'. There are many consumer goods, a small cave with a baby, a boy turning his back to the cave and towards the consumer goods, a sleigh with deer, frightened by a tiger, and an endless number of Santa Clauses. The room was a little dirty at the end of the day.
The tidying up went reasonably well. A good work day.

Tuesday, December 7th

The day started off badly. Cláudia, Sátia, Jéssica, Isaías, and Fábio went shopping at the neighbourhood association's café after already having been at the schoolyard, and came to the classroom around 9:20. I made it clear that punctuality is something to be respected. I immediately began the writing assignment in reverent silence; I couldn't understand if they were angry with me or if they thought I was right. The fact is, the assignment went very well, until Jéssica and Sátia decided to sabotage it: they went to play outside. Today I didn't allow any deviations; I went to get them, and they returned to the classroom grumbling, but they got to work.
Before the break, few had picked up on the plan. In general, there is greater adherence to the math-related proposals than to the

language-related ones.
After the break, calm reigns in the room. The plan is working well, and I get to spend a lot of time with Fábio. Daniela is working with Soraia and Indira; the others are 'at work'. I have some doubts about Luís and Isaías' production. Adelino also sometimes puts things off.
Luís' main problem is that he doesn't want to get tired. Things do not really interest him. The other two still have significant reading difficulties, which doesn't make it easy to diversify their approaches.
Lunchtime is hectic in the canteen. This is partly due to Pedro (3rd year) threatening a classmate by grabbing him by the neck and pulling out a box cutter. I have to intervene, I immobilise his hand and take the knife away. He goes outside to get some fresh air, but the others are agitated. After lunch I show them that 'nothing happened'. I go to talk to Pedro: "So, are you calmer now?" "Yes." "I gave your box cutter to your sister." "Ciao, see you later."
The afternoon flies by like a train: *Read, tell and show* first (negotiated in the morning to compensate for the bad start) where the only topic of conversation is presents and Christmas trees. How many they already have, the size of the tree, if it's beautiful, etc.
We then took the Cuisenaire rods and compared series.
There is approximately three-quarters of an hour left for planning work: drawing, projects, Christmas cards and the anarchist panel.
The tidying up goes well, we evaluate the day and leave satisfied. After all, what seemed like a bad day ended well. "Bué," "fixe," "bué da bom," and "bô ca bei" are definitively part of the classroom slang.

Thursday, December 9th

A good day, apart from the big fight between Jessica and Sátia. But let's start from the beginning. During *Read, tell and show* I announce that we will not be able to meet with the correspondents on Monday because they are very busy preparing their Christmas party. I say I'll pick up the mail in the afternoon, and that we'll meet at the beginning of January. Luís mentions that he went to his grandmother's birthday party, and we launch into a discussion about ages.

We're launched into the moment, and after a joint announcement from Sátia, Cláudia, and Guida that they went to the circus, confirmed by others who also went, we have news from Bernardo: "Tomorrow I'll have cable TV at home." I ask what that means. Someone says it's the puppet channel.

Eu: Are you sure about that?

Joseph: No, it's not quite like that.

Eu: So how does it work? A television hanging from a cable?

Cláudia: No, but you know, Pascal, and wants to know if we know.

And we continue our conversation...

The following writing assignment also went well. A text by Cíntia about the Zoo made me realise that seven of my pupils (a third) have never been to a zoo.

Text work occupies the morning. There's little plan work and — again — no inclination to prepare the project work. Computers, cell phones, and car circuits will have to wait a little longer.

In the afternoon, despite the rain, the Barbie project presentation is wonderful. The presenters manage to create the necessary silence

in the room to present their findings. They are funny in the way they present the different models and the seriousness with which they answer questions like "Is this what you have, or do you know this model exists?" ("We have some, the rest we studied and discovered") and also with the enthusiasm with which they answer questions like "Why is Barbie called Barbie?". They even discover that Barbie is two years younger than me.
We continued the day with the work plan. What seemed to be a peaceful day (I even managed to laminate Christmas cards for some students while they were making them) explodes into violence: a fight broke out between Sátia and Jessica, who refused to explain why, and they started pulling each other's hair. I intervened. While Sátia quickly calmed down (the yellow belt worked), Jessica started pinching and hurting. I was occupied with her for a while. I received understanding looks from Luís and Fábio. Adelino — whose eye hurt a lot — came to check if everything was alright. Things calmed down, and by the end of the day, the tidying up went well. I went to get poster board to make a display, and then: another violent attack.
There was a third one almost at 15:30.

Friday, December 10th

Today's team is reduced to just myself. Sátia is more interested in assembling the dollhouse, Jéssica only shows up at odd hours. Mafalda goes over the day's plan.
Around 9:20, we managed to begin. *Read, tell and show* didn't develop much today, except for Iolanda who recounted a birthday party where her cousin turned two. Another problem regarding

dates and years.
After *Read, tell and show*, we unwrapped the mail.
The drawings and Christmas cards are inexpensive. After the initial hustle and bustle of distribution, things calm down, and much of the work done from the planning stage is for correspondents.
After recess, checking the equations represented by the Cuisenaire rods isn't very easy. Jessica, Sátia, and Cláudia, and by extension Aida, don't participate, leaving Isaías doing nothing. After some time, Cláudia reconsiders, changes tables, and joins the others.
The plan evaluation is going well. There's the usual disorganisation, with everyone wanting to staple their plan together at the same time, but there are no fights or arguments. Attention to others' plans is less than usual.
The Council meeting is going well. They are more attentive, and the fact that the items bear the author's signature has greatly reduced the aggressiveness: they themselves acknowledge that this was the right thing to do; unsigned items are simply not read.
Indira owes a pair of scissors (Edmar is the one who remembers this, not Soraia, who as always doesn't quite know what we're talking about).
Luís has difficulty staying seated, he has to take a few others with him. Sátia and Jessica don't believe (or don't want to?) in the Council. They are always contrarian and provoking.
Almost all the issues are resolved with excuses. Only Indira's and José's groping incidents don't go unpunished. There's a pattern here to analyse: Cláudia orders José to grope Aida. There are minor punishments: 1 day without painting, remaining outside her work group (and being outside the group, in Indira's case, means a bestial

peace — both for her and for us).
We still approve of Edmar's responsibility: the geoboard. We also accept a new rule: "during plan work, collective work is prioritised" (which is just instituting something the children have already started to do: a lot of cooperative work appears, on dossier sheets, instead of in personal notebooks).
After the Council meeting, we have the rest of the afternoon free (a little less than an hour). Interesting. Now that they can play freely with the dollhouse they've organized, they can't stand more than a quarter of an hour. So they have problems. This is mainly the case with Sátia and Jessica. The children who are working on projects work a lot during this free afternoon (Aida thus makes up for what she didn't do during the rest of the week).
When it comes time to tidy up, I have a great team taking care of it. We leave with the room tidy without a plan evaluation, but in a good mood.

Monday, December 13th

The week promises to be difficult. The start of the day is somewhat chaotic, with lots of dolls mixed in with the 'Barbie girls' section. Aida continues to be the group's maid, always cutting things out. *Read, tell and show.* They start off rather slowly and linger on endless paths about gifts and Christmas trees. No books, but action figures, batmen, other-men, and designer clothes. The neighbours greener grass calls. The Christmas spirit is far away.
After recess we check the class newspaper accounts, and they show us that we've lost 600 escudos since the beginning of the school year, which is not much, partly since there was a mistake in our

favour on the last delivery from the Office Centre. In the afternoon, the plan doesn't go well. There's a lot of confusion, a lot of slowness at the beginning of the work, which is limited to cutting, pasting, Christmas cards, and clothes for the cardboard dolls.
At the end of the day, crisis: while we're tidying up, there's — imagine — ice cream being handed out — a promotional offer!! The room is turned upside down, and I get angry because of the mess they leave in the classroom library.
I take all games home, and the cardboard dollhouse, covered in ice cream stains, ends up in the trash.

Tuesday, December 14th

I thought I was going to hear a lot of things because of the kamikaze stunt with the dollhouse, but no. Edmar asks why I took the games home. I mention my excitement and that I don't want to see the games ruined. Edmar agrees when I say that I'll bring them back after Christmas.
Meanwhile, we begin with *Read, tell and show* (more presents and predictable changes of home).
The work isn't going badly, but there are some who do not take off. Isaiah is waiting for Guida to copy, Indira is waiting for everyone, and Soraia doesn't do anything very elaborate.
They work on the tests cards until recess, while I've already warned them that the next day it will be until they're finished.
After recess, we have newspaper reading, illustration, and planning. The reading is quick, but some children don't participate. Not everyone wants to illustrate. In the planning phase, a small group (Cíntia, Bernardo, Adelino (who has a high fever), and Soraia) join

me to work in their math notebooks and make “little books”.
Indira comes to ask some things to write: she wants everyone to have a house as Christmas present and sends a Merry Christmas to all the poor children.
Out of the corner of my eye, I see Edmar engrossed in his task with the geoboards. Sátia starts working in the corner of the library. Isaías is looking at a book. Aida, Cláudia, and Guida are making index cards. Luís, Edmar, and José are playing multiplication tables. And it's time to tidy up.
In the afternoon, working with Cuisenaire rods is difficult.
We start working on the plan when there is another interruption: the after-school activity centre manager arrived to take some of the children out of the classroom for another Christmas outing (and another gift and another sales promotion). They left, remaining only six in the room. After the initial discussion about selling the newspapers and when to sell them, I authorised those six to go around in the school and sell them. Which they did with great skill. The initial discussion was with Cláudia and Jéssica, who wanted to sell their personal newspapers for double the price. At the end of the day, they helped tidy up — but not too much — and the day ends again without the plan being evaluated. Wicked Santa...

Wednesday, December 15th

After the *Read, tell and show* activity, which yielded no new developments, we continued with the tests. Suddenly, everyone rushed off to recess. Production mysteriously accelerated. After recess, work continued based on the individual work plan that many had already begun.

A day without major events, but also without major annoyances.

Thursday, December 16th

In *Read, tell and show* they continue to talk only about presents, although the way Mafalda brings them in is funny: as if it were a mathematical riddle. Cláudia talks about the Christmas tree, Luís about the bicycle.
The day's plan, proposed by the children, includes plan work, plan evaluation, and Council. Plus the usual Christmas craziness, with presents and little gifts. It seems ambitious to me, but I accept it. I'm amazed when, after *Read, tell and show* everyone starts working and a sacred silence settles in the classroom. I've never had such a good moment of independent study.
After recess, we skip the council meeting because everyone wants to continue with the plan. Everything goes well until our *secret friends* show up to give us a promotional watch offered by the city council. We thank and sing, and then get confused because there are twenty watches to set.
In the afternoon, the Council meeting goes reasonably well. Edmar receives his brown belt +/-. We congratulate several students. Criticisms are not of great importance, except for José (the groping incident) and Indira, who continues to be the black sheep of the class. Cláudia states I got unfairly angry with her. She accepts my apology. Minor incidents throughout the week, but nothing disproportionate.
After the council meeting, the free afternoon goes well until the delivery of yet another publicity stunt, this time for a cupcake and cake company. Consumerism is rampant.

At the end of the day, I can keep the troops calm though so they can go and deliver the gifts to the first-grade children who were chosen as *secret Santa*...
A Christmas to remember.

With batteries recharged: the second term

Monday, January 3, 2000

We started. Sátia was already at school at 8 in the morning.
She moved house, she lives in Oeiras, but for now she's coming here to school.
At 9 o'clock everyone is in, except Adilson and Luís, who didn't shown up all day.
Before starting, I gave some instructions regarding the work plans, promised to review the assessment tests with them, and emphasised the importance of reading and the math challenges. Before the *Read, tell and show* activity, I already had a group working!
Then it was hard work getting those people to plan, but we planned...
It was fun to see that Adelino and Bernardo wrote what they wanted to show me. Actually, Adelino came with an extraordinary willingness to work. Edmar noticed and went to sit next to him. Aida is also more comfortable with her writing. She's stopped being such a perfectionist and she writes! Sátia tried to resist a bit but then she came along. She tried again in the afternoon but it didn't last long.
Jessica was in a very bad mood. She only felt better after lunch. Was it due to lack of food?

The writing wasn't particularly special. Interestingly, the much-talked-about gifts (before Christmas) aren't mentioned in the writings. They mention short visits, cakes they ate, and little else.
After the break, Cláudia and Sátia, accompanied by Jéssica and Isaías, had difficulty getting started with their work. But while Cláudia and Sátia presented a lot of completed work (they started working early, before the *Read, tell and show* segment), Jéssica and Isaías were unable to present anything.
I announced a need to change the afternoon's plans, which the children readily accepted: projects for Tuesday (Isabel will be able to join us) and today I'll work for the correspondents.
During planning time, I worked with Edmar (long text with huge sentences), with Bernardo and Adelino (green multiplication cards that worked well), in addition to giving Aida some clues and keeping an eye on the four scheme-breakers. Daniela supported Indira and Soraia.
The day ends calmly, although there's always some tension between Cláudia and Aida. A day without conflict!

Tuesday, January 4th

Today Luís and Adilson were in the classroom. Only Sandro is missing; he hasn't been to school in ages. We'll have to do something about him.
Many had already brought authorization to accompany on the visit to the correspondents. José, Luís, and Edmar made a reasonable team. Edmar took care of the day's plan. A packed plan: *Read, tell and show*, text, problem, plan, the history of numerals, and project organisation. But we managed to get everything done.

The writing assignment went reasonably well. We modified a text by Luís, about Adelino. A short account! Bernardo was very happy to have managed to work until the break and finish before playing. For the most part, everyone managed to answer the questions, some of which were quite difficult.

After recess, we had a really nice problem moment.

There was some more plan work time, and most of them followed the rule of working on either language or mathematics. Only Isaiah, Adelino, and Luis went beyond the limits.

In the afternoon, the troops enter agitated. There were minor altercations. We have two visitors* in the room as a teacher is absent. One of the visitors makes me a little nervous. A small problem with the computer, with him at the controls, immediately unnerves me. Luís solves the problem.

In the early afternoon, we worked on the numbers on the grid again. Things are starting to fall into place.

Around two o'clock, Isabel joined us to work on the projects. After seeing who would be working on what, and noting that the airplane and plant project groups had their things practically ready, we decided to move on to planning the new projects: Cell phones, computers, bicycles, Batman, and Santa Claus. Aida will work alone on her project.

Everyone chooses a three-week deadline to present their work.

The groups needed a lot of time to start planning what they were going to research, but they managed to do it eventually. Isabel was a valuable support.

Luís and Adelino made the work very difficult throughout the afternoon. There were about four conflict situations.

The day didn't end well: we realised too late that it was time to clean up, and we suffered the consequences
A tough workday.

Wednesday, January 5th

The day starts well with a very well-received *Read, tell and show* segment, in which the leaders and Rodrigo (who shows off his new sneakers), Adelino and José speak. The other news doesn't matter much.
After the *Read, tell and show* activity, we corrected Jessica's text for the class newspaper and I proposed a reading and writing assignment. The writing about favourite animals has some surprises: a poem by Cláudia, a very long text by Edmar, a funny text by Rodrigo, and interesting texts by Mafalda, Aida, and José. I sometimes get the impression that Sátia has some difficulties that she doesn't want to show (out of vanity?) and that she hides behind a halo of provocation.
The work lasted almost until recess.
After recess, we started a project that captivated them all for a while, using Cuisenaire rods. We went to discover what is the significance of single-coloured 'rugs'.
When I wanted to finish, I had to give a long sermon to get silence and attention. In retrospect I found it a bit ridiculous, but at the time it had the dubious effect of a teacher who got annoyed with his pupils behaviour. In the end, they also found the work interesting. Which was stimulating.
In the afternoon we had foreseen plan work, and that's what we did. Mafalda finished the +/- red test well and moves on to green.

Bernardo, Aida, José, and Edmar worked very well. Soraia got the computer job, as did Cláudia. Rodrigo wrote a lot (for the correspondent). Cláudia's group 'played school', which is a way of doing plan work, although in a somewhat questionable way. Today they did a dictation... (Cláudia read the text).
We tidied up together and sang happy birthday to Iolanda (without cake).
At three o'clock we left with the room nice and tidy.

Thursday, January 6th

A day of kings. We begin with quick planning: projects, plan and plan evaluation, advice and work for correspondents.
During the project moment, "the airplanes" finished their work without much discussion. Since the Batman group has practically the same people involved, they later switched to this new project. Bernardo went to work on "the computers". Rodrigo and Adilson started working on bicycles with Isabel's support. The cell phone group might cause some problems because there are many girls and they want to get things done quickly. We still don't quite understand what they actually want to investigate. It's obvious that Cláudia is the one who works the most in this group.
In the computer group, Iolanda took command of the troops. It's the group most interested in their subject. The *Santa Clauses* haven't started yet because Aida is finishing her work on the plants.
The break lasted a little longer because we had cake and juice in the classroom after recess; the Bolo Rei [traditional cake on this day] arrived late.
We started the work period of the plan, which went well for most of

the children. I noticed again that without Luís in the room, Adelino behaves very differently. He worked attentively, as did Bernardo and Aida; he even cried when he had to tidy up. Cláudia completed worksheets, Sátia, Guida, and Jéssica didn't get to start. Iolanda and Soraia applied themselves, and so did Andreia. Her stepmother still doesn't allow outings. The girl won't be with us tomorrow at the correspondent's. Rodrigo is working well, and Isaías also did his language copy. José invested equally in the language. A good moment, with a very calm organisation of the worksheets in the individual work plan.

The reading of the work was honest. Sátia and Edmar acknowledged that they did a so-so job, Jessica considers that she did a bad job (which is true), and in general, they were quite attentive to the others.

After the room was quickly tidied up, we had a successful Council meeting in the afternoon. This was helped by the fact that there were few criticisms and great attention from the leaders. Cláudia immediately lent her chair to Andreia so she could sit next to me, which earned her congratulations.

Mafalda calmly explained what happened with Isaiah (the assault, though she wasn't involved in the discussion) which resulted in him being denied permission to move around the room. José again needed a warning for groping girls, a charge brought on by Cláudia. This time, judging by José's reaction, there was no double-dealing on Cláudia's part, or at least it wasn't apparent.

The congratulations in the *we liked* section* were quick, mine and about José, andCláudia, the *I propose* section was limited to a proposal from Mafalda changing belt colour for the +/- cards.

Then my proposal to take a display of Christmas cards to our correspondents, as a gift, was accepted.
Everything was very calm and organized. I was amazed. The magical three months later, about which Fernand Oury speaks so often?
We parted in good spirits.

Friday, January 7th

At 9 a.m. there were 14 are present. Indira and Andreia couldn't go, nor could Soraia. Isaiah didn't bring the written authorization. Luis and Sandro weren't there, and Jessica was late.
With the other 14 [the bus number is also 14], we then went to the Voz do Operário school in Ajuda, where we arrived a quarter to ten.
First contact with the school: a "very cool" recess. They rode bicycles and played table football. Then the correspondents arrived, who were still in their free time.
First physical contact: some pairs meet. Others hide or continue playing.
When my colleague Julieta and I suggested going to the room for a more formal exchange, everyone rushed over. Then, we exchanged envelopes. The correspondents made a cake, which we're going to eat in the nearby windmill park. Mr. Mário, the driver, is taking us there in two trips.
For almost 3 hours they go up and down, visit the windmill, swing in the playground, play, and talk. Some pairs change: Mafalda and Sátia get along very well, as do Bernardo and Rodrigo. Bernardo gets along well with his pen pal, Cláudia also says that Telma is cute (shy but cute), Soraia and Cláudia also "click," and at the time of parting no one else suggests swapping partners, which doesn't

mean that they can't happen in the future. I don't think the Adilson-Filipe pairing will last, and the mix-ups between boys and girls can still change too...
The cake is good, and they eat it with enthusiasm, despite the impressive amount of food some they brought themselves as snack.
At the time of farewell, there are big *goodbyes*, with the promise of the Ajuda school to visit us.
A quiet shorter afternoon with some planning work, some computer work, modelling clay and drawings... for the pen pals, of course!
At the end of the day, they're too lazy to get ready for the parents' meeting, as I suggested. It's simple: they have trouble getting started, but they never have a set time to finish.
This week ended well. There's still some work to do, but aside from a sermon on Wednesday, we understood each other regarding the work.

Monday, January 10th

The week starts off hectic. Lots of things to hand in, the painting area is in terrible condition (someone left their brushes drying out), and the whole class is back, except for Sandro and Soraia, but with 4 pupils from one of the 1st-grade teachers.
Working with Cuisenaire rods for the MCDU [thousands hundreds tens units grid] curriculum works well. We arrive at lunchtime to find only one sermon about the work to be done...
In the afternoon, starting the text work is arduous, but after a while, participation is good: we learn the meaning of ATL, of Nesquick®,

and we reorganise Edmar's text.
The only problem is once again Indira, who causes instability. In fact, as soon as she returns to her work group, difficulties start.
The planning session extends to other activities and involves modelling clay: we create the contents of a festive dinner table, and I take the opportunity to learn some Creole words about food with the Cape Verdean children. We arrive at the end of the afternoon at 2:50 pm, and the ten minutes are perfectly sufficient to tidy up and evaluate the day.
A day without major events, but also without major catastrophes.

Tuesday, January 11th

The day began with a well-organised team, and some girls gathered around the dough making dinners.
A quick roundup of *Read, tell and show* in which Cláudia recounts seeing me in the street, Indira having some non-news, as does Adelino, birthday parties, visits to cousins and little else.
A packed schedule: *Read, tell and show,* project, plan, text work and letter writing, and still some time for art activities.
After recess, the individual study work was exemplary. Only Soraia and Luís couldn't keep up the pace. Around me were Cláudia, Sátia, Aida, Mafalda Iolanda, Bernardo, and José working.
Around Daniela were Indira, Adelino, Isaías (who was tired of working), Soraia, and, occasionally, Luís. Adilson proposed the LOCO mathematical puzzle (so he doesn't have to write anything down). It was an excellent work session, so I immediately congratulated my little learners.
In the afternoon the accelerated rhythm continues: great interest in

writing letters to TIL (theatre), to the Swiss embassy and to the president of Portugal[5].
Then, in 10 minutes they finish the worksheet about Edmar's text. I helped José, Adelino, Isaías, and Soraia without interfering too much with the occasional support I provided to the others. I had time to help Cláudia and Sátia make paints, Guida, Adilson, and Sátia were back on the computer, and the group reunited around the play dough in the late afternoon, while some of them made paintings.
At the end of the day we took stock, and Bernardo and his team tidied up the room nicely at my request.
A full day without any arguments, despite the nonsense Indira spouts from time to time.

Wednesday, January 12th

Another very long day. We started with a *Read, tell and show* activity where Mafalda told a story about a badly treated frozen chicken that they had to return to Jumbo. Cláudia, Guida, Cíntia and Isaías sang a song they learned at the after-school program. Then the usual things.
We relate Pythagoras (multiplication tables) to Cuisenaire rods[6].
After recess we have independent study work and things are going well. We are surprised by the lunch break bell.

Thursday, January 13th

Today we have two girls from another class in the room, while

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[5] See below, *The story of a socio-centred pedagogical proposal*

[6] See Narciso, Miguel e Paulus, Pascal (2005: 84).

Adilson, Andreia, Aida, and Sandro didn't show up. There are many people for the *Read, tell and show* activity, including Yolande and Elisabeth, who came from another class because the teacher was absent. Cláudia is shy to speak but asks Guida to ask the class if she can celebrate her birthday in the room. Obviously, we agree. Edmar talks about his brother who turned 5.

Cláudia and Sátia, from the cell phone project, showed up with a phone made of yogurt cups. We were able to talk and hear each other from one end of the room to the other, one speaking softly into the cup, the other holding the cup on one's ear. A great success! We still need to find out how wireless cell phones work...

After recess, inside the building and partly inside the classroom because it's raining heavily, we have a dream project moment: everyone working quietly and without commotion, except for Indira who spoils the party twice. Once, because she's angry and doesn't want to enter the room, and then again because, upon entering, she destabilises everything. But everyone else works peacefully, and Luís writes a rich text for the second time. Actually, Luís' biggest problem is being clever and not wanting to work. So he only speak up when there are things he considers truly important. The group really starts to function, and autonomy takes on new dimensions. There are still many requests for materials, but often it's more out of carelessness and laziness than necessity.

In the class diary, proposals for belt changes and congratulations take up a lot of space.

At lunchtime, the rain falls in an impressive way.

I enter the room in the afternoon with some trepidation. But no. The same calm reigns as in the morning. We analyse a problem

during math class.
In the plan, the play dough calls again, but much more calmly; there are some games, painting, computers, a library, and even Isaiah, who continues making worksheets.
Ten minutes to three, the team of the day (a good team today with Cíntia, Indira and Iolanda) starts to get ready and a little before three we are ready.
If every day were like this, I wouldn't have anything left to tell...

Friday, January 14th

Not every day is like this... today was a slow day with many disturbances.
We already have 6 visitors from other classrooms: with two teachers absent and all 'intruders' wanting to work on the computer...
My class isn't taking this very favourably. We started with a fairly broad round of *Read, tell and show* but it lacked much substance.
After the break, during which we narrowly escaped being caught in the rain, the plan was quite chaotic, perhaps because the computer and the library corner were overrun by visitors. It was a real struggle. I have a big argument with Adelino over a word identification. I'm not sure if Adelino is as forgetful as he seems.
A quarter to noon, we started stapling plans and doing the self-evaluation. The evaluation went well, with correct self-criticism in most cases, except for Bernardo who gave himself a *"I did a bad job"* just to make his colleagues say otherwise.
The team helped a little with the tidying up (Luís, Isaías — José isn't here) and we managed to get the room tidy for the Council.

A pointless argument among adults about school organisation during lunchtime makes me furious. I enter the room with little patience, and this causes me to ruin the Council meeting. The children take a long time to arrive, I get angry, and then it's difficult to have a serious conversation. Aida and Soraia quickly become angry, and Sátia comes in to cause trouble, even overtly.
But we decided a few things: there's a new rule according to which computer work has to be original work — no more copies. This comes as a result of a complaint by Soraia about Sátia not respecting the order of registration and going ahead of her turn on the computer. Luís remembered a conversation I had with him about favouring creative work over copies. Soraia agrees. The problem is that she still isn't well-accepted in the group and, for now, this issue is not to be addressed.
Isaiah is thrilled to change belts in reading and behaviour, and Edmar also expresses his satisfaction with the transition to blue in writing. Cláudia, Satia, and Mafalda consider their own belt colour changes to be something natural.
Aida is also very happy with the improvement in her writing. The congratulations fade a bit in the final discussions, but let's just say that throughout the afternoon we managed to understand each other for about half an hour.

Monday, January 17th

The week begins with a long round of *Read, tell and show* after a somewhat apathetic team — whenever it's Sátia's team's turn, Sátia is less willing to contribute — gets things organised. Jessica immediately proposes to make the day's plan. A long round of *Read,*

tell and show ensues, where it's possible to listen, except when Cláudia and Sátia distract their group. There's little of interest in *Read, tell and show* either and it should be made clearer to the children that it's not worth talking just for the sake of talking. In fact, Luís has already realised this and occasionally signs up only to then refuse to speak.

After the *Read, tell and show* session, I hand over the corrected plans and assignments from the previous week, and we agree on the work for the week and the day.

We have our January newspaper reading session — it's still aloud, but some are already starting to read the fine print themselves.

Routine has settled in, even in work organised according to the individual plan, and in fact, I'm starting to notice some very different behaviours: there's a group that thrives through routine and the autonomy given to them. I see the slow maturation of Edmar, Rodrigo, Isaías, Adelino, and Cíntia; Cláudia and Sátia, on the other hand, shy away from organised work.

During the activities, Luís, Cláudia, and Sátia made geometric patterns on a sheet of graph paper. I worked with Adilson (yellow language cards), with Bernardo (green +/-), with Edmar (green reading and then blue x), in addition to attending to requests from Guida (computer) and Mafalda (green +/- preparing for the test), and Aida, with some questions on a language card.

Tuesday, January 18th

The change in the room (two groups of ten, caused by the observation that they were having difficulty seeing the blackboard) is noticed by Cláudia, Guida, and Iolanda, first thing in the morning

before we enter, which prompts Cláudia's philosophical comment: *"I don't know, Pascal, but this might make us talk more..."*
The others join, although Jessica, Soraia, and José are absent — the latter shows up late in the afternoon to say he was very ill, in the hospital and all — in addition to Sandro's ever-present absence.
A little round of *Read, tell and show.* Just Cláudia, about the years, me, about the writing notebooks, Mafalda about the sick family and Adelino about his brother's birthday.
Next, we look at the graphs about the road[7].
During the independent study, absolute calm reigns. Only Adelino, Isaías, and Luís become unbalanced in the last 15 minutes. Cláudia throws a tantrum in the middle because she doesn't have exclusive support.
Indira doesn't work much. Iolanda does math spreadsheets with me. Bernardo does too. Mafalda is circling the green +/- test and Adelino is eyeing the red division cards.
At the end of the day, it wasn't possible to evaluate the plan because they were scattered in various locations.

Wednesday, January 19th

The day is starting well: we counted cars at the school gate.
The entrance to the room is less ideal: lots of talking, lots of confusion, a weak team (Isaiah, Rodrigo, and someone else, since Fabio is no longer there). Then, Sátia disrupts things by writing the names of people she thinks should have things to say on the board. I try to regulate things, but the *Read, tell and show* activity is already

[7] See further: *December – April: The Portela Road*.

getting little attention.
The plan work time went wrong. All I know is that I worked with a small group: Bernardo, who brilliantly applied his grid knowledge; Mafalda, who was struggling with the green +/- test; Adelino, very concerned about whether he was working well or badly, dispatched two worksheets; Luís started working late. Daniela tried to convince Guida and Jessica to work; Aida was feeling down; Indira didn't do much. Andreia, on the other hand, was becoming increasingly autonomous and went to write a text on the computer. I didn't see anything from Cíntia. When lunchtime arrived, both Daniela and I had the feeling — perhaps not entirely justified — that not much work had been done. This idea is mainly due to the noise that was made and Sátia's continuous opposition.
In the afternoon, when we started packing up, there was a first "fight" between Luís and José because of the motorcycle toy Luís brought. Luís said that José destroyed the suspension spring. Then things seemed to calm down. A few moments later, Luís was hitting José so hard on the head with the motorcycle that parts flew everywhere. José controlled himself, crying softly with clenched fists. Luís had to let off steam and calmed down. José came to count cars with me, and Luís disappeared. I saw him again at the time of leaving school, in good spirits and with a big "*See you tomorrow*".

Thursday, January 20th

Another rather hectic day. First, I'd forgotten an intern was coming to do some sociometric survey for her thesis. That took up almost the entire morning until break. I suggested to integrate it into the *Read, tell and show* moment because I misunderstood what she

wanted.
Even so, I think my students behaved very well during this drought.
Mafalda told a great story about her cat that stayed out all night and only came back in the morning covered in blood.
Next to recess, project work.
In the afternoon, they already had Cláudia's birthday party on their minds. In the half-hour planned, one cannot say they were very productive, except for making drawings and crowns for Cláudia.
The party went beautifully; last year's teacher, who was invited, thinks they're much more grown-up and responsible. It's true that, with so much cake, they didn't even had time to waste with games and running around.
They leave calmly. All that's left is the day's evaluation, just like the last two days...

Friday, January 21st

A day that promised to be beautiful turned out to be extremely complicated. At 8:30 a colleague phoned to say she was sick, and at 9 am I had 13 more students in the classroom because they all wanted to stay with Pascal. I warned them it would be a little difficult, but the children insisted, also because the visitors said they brought the textbook they use and that they had work to do. So we planned: *Read, tell and show*, Cuisenaire and Pythagoras, plan work, Council, writing workshop and the rest of the afternoon free.
In *Read, tell and show* there are no new things. Just a discussion about the contents of cereals and prices. The other children don't participate.
When it's time for work plan, things go well enough. Daniela comes

to help and, apart from the fact that the children from the other class swarm around the library and the computer, peace settles in the room. Cláudia works with Daniela, as do Guida, Ana, and two or three from the other class. I have time for José, Bernardo, Adelino, Rodrigo, Cíntia, and Edmar.
We managed to stop around 11:50 to assess the plan, with more noise than usual.
At lunchtime, the team helps me tidy up the room and prepare it for the Council.
The Council is off to a great start and receiving a lot of attention from everyone.
Cláudia criticised my behaviour towards her when I prevented her to pick exercise cards that were too easy for her. I explained that I thought it was a waste of time, but that she might be right when she said I was rude. I apologised, reiterating that I believe everyone has to work at their own level of difficulty. She accepted my apology.
A problem arose between Adelino and Isaías, which Luís witnessed firsthand, and Luís wrote about it in his diary on Adelino's behalf. He is accused of protecting his friend, who also mistreated Isaías. Luís defends both of them, saying it was him to write in the diary because Adelino had difficulty doing so (which is probably true). In the end, Isaías and Adelino shake hands, and I suggest that Luís receive the yellow belt for behaviour, for having been able to use the classroom equipment. Luís accepts the responsibility, as do the others.
In the "I propose" section, I had planned to change Aida's behaviour belt to yellow, but there's a boycott from the *Cape Verdean clan*. I will propose it again. Regarding the colour changes for the exercise

cards, there's no opposition, of course.
There's a heated discussion when Mafalda offers to be in charge of the painting. Sátia feels attacked. I say I support the offer, since we had to wait until Wednesday to get paints, and Mafalda was the one who made them. Guida becomes the assistant for the geoboards (I don't quite understand why) and Andreia is put in charge of the writing proposals cards. There are small advances. In the end, the meeting is a bit disorganised, thanks to Jessica and Sátia... always Sátia.
I'll introduce the writing workshop with the cooperative creation of a story. The activity will occupy about a dozen children until the end of the afternoon, while the others go on to do other things as they finish.
Around 2:50 PM, we take stock of the day and start tidying up. We are all amazed at how much we worked today, under these difficult conditions.

Monday, January 24th

The day begins with lots of Read, tell and show activities and four visitors, who monopolise the computer for almost the entire day. Cláudia complains throughout the day but at the same time lets them work, even though we had agreed that the class-pupils had priority for writing texts.
Anyway, we started with a lot of *Read, tell and show* and then we had all the organisation of the week that led us to a quarter to ten. Then we got the Cuisenaire rods.
After recess, we had an exemplary independent study work. I started working with Iolanda (and didn't have time to finish) on the

Cuisenaire 'ladder' from 10 to 20.
Many children take on assignments and, after a quarter of an hour, silence settles in the room; the work is so intense that I actually have to remind them to pack up 2-3 minutes before the bell rings.
In the afternoon things are a bit more complicated: the presentation of the work on plants is difficult and slow, with Aida completely monopolising Mafalda and Andreia.
Then we moved on to the writing workshop.
This makes the afternoon's work plan very short. It's worth noting that Sátia and Mafalda manage to make paints practically on their own. And Cláudia controls herself very well while she waits. Some beautiful flowers appear at the end of the afternoon. The boys are disoriented, especially Luís and Adelino. Luís has to be reprimanded in function of his colour belt-sensitive behaviour.
At the end of the day, we read the plan, concluded that we had done everything, packed up, and left. A good start to the week.

Tuesday, January 25th

But it's a long week. Today, the *Read, tell and show* segment wasn't very long. We had a funny Mafalda story about cat food, which ends with the cat taking half a sardine to the roof for "his girlfriend, the female cat." Cláudia announces a new car, which immediately raises questions about engine size and top speeds. That's about it.
After recess, the class has difficulty establishing a work routine. After 20 minutes things improve, although I have to intervene several times with Indira, Adelino, José, and Soraia to calm things down.
The turtle Logo* already lives in her house and the car is already

running.
In the afternoon there's project work at the library.
At the end of the day, during tidying up, I was angry because of Cláudia and Sátia's behaviour who turned the library upside down. Isabel (responsible for the library) agrees to be present at the Council meeting on Friday.

Wednesday, January 26th

In the segment *Read, tell and show* Luís announces that his mother is pregnant. Cláudia immediately asks if it's her husband's. Luís confirms and says that if it's a boy, he will be named Fábio; if it's a girl, they don't have a name yet. Mafalda has a story about cereal bowls that nobody quite understands.
Adilson has something to say, which doesn't happen often: his mother is waiting for her bonus to buy him a pair of Nike sneakers.
There's more news, highlighting José's dad's new van (?) and Edmar's friend who won a game 10 to 1.
The day's plan includes first writing for the newspaper, which we've since changed to a writing workshop. Then there's individual work plan, a presentation of the work on airplanes, Cuisenaire rods, and finally another work plan moment.
But today will be a little different.
After recess, the plan goes well and I start to go wrong: headaches that make me stop thinking. A short time later, José's mother comes to ask if José can leave to go to the hospital to visit his grandfather who is hospitalised. José leaves, but very anxious because of the presentation of the project about airplanes, which he is part of. We agree to postpone it to tomorrow.

I don't feel any better in the afternoon. Aida tells me I'm quite pale, and the others turn the noise down.
The visitors from a absent teacher class wrote me a message: *"Mr. Pascal, we really liked your classroom and you. Kisses from Andreia and Soraia."*
Francisco, also a visitor, who had been with us yesterday and returned today, discovered some techniques for making dominoes fall over.
I work with Bernardo, Rodrigo, and Adilson. I say that I don't feel capable of doing Cuisenaire rod work. We extend the plan work, which is only difficult for Adelino and Luís, who become disoriented. By the end of the day, they've "*infected*" Edmar and Adilson. The girls, on the other hand, are growing up, Isaías clings to them and becomes a very sociable guy.
At the end of the day we have time to sing, something we haven't done in a while.
They all ask if I'll please not be absent tomorrow because there's a play to finish. I promise to go to bed early.

Thursday, January 27th

I went to bed early. Everything was fine this morning.
Cláudia, worried, comes to see if I'm in the room. Aida lets out a sigh of relief. José is worried. He's embarrassed to present his work on airplanes. I tell him things will be alright.
We have the same four visitors in the room and an extremely long list for *Read, tell and show*. Soraia has a long story about her grandmother whom she wants to visit but whose mother won't let her see. Luís thinks it's all a lie (I'm not so sure and would like to

know more about that grandmother's story). Cláudia talks about shopping, as do Guida, Adelino and Iolanda. Bernardo went to the stadium to see the Benfica team lose. Indira has another story: her grandmother bought her a computer... dream mixes with reality...
In the afternoon, we first wrote the letter to the City Council[8]. The work is difficult to get started. Indira cursed at the policeman outside the school and there's a dispute between them, which continues in the school hallway. After some time, he makes her go into the room, where it takes her 5 minutes to calm down. She remains very calm for the rest of the afternoon.
José, Adelino, and Bernardo settle in to present their project.
In the middle of the presentation, which has everyone's attention, there are lively debates, mainly between Luís, Sátia, Guida, Iolanda, and the presenters.
There's still half an hour of plan work left, in which *Cláudia's girls* continue preparations for the play they invented about a wedding, while Aida, Mafalda, Andreia, Iolanda, and Bernardo continue to do... more worksheets.
At the end of the day, the team takes a while to start tidying up. Finally, those responsible for the various areas oversee the tidying, and the assistants congratulate them for finding the room so tidy, which makes cleaning easier.

Friday, January 28th

The day began with a somewhat clumsy team (Isaiah and Rodrigo, supported by Cláudia and Jessica), but the team quickly regrouped.

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[8] See further: *December – April: The Portela Road*.

Rodrigo wrote a plan for the full day: *Read, tell and show,* problem, a request for a writing workshop, the plan and evaluation, Council, and free afternoon.

In the *Read, tell and show* segment, Andreia told a great story about some money her 'mother' gave her, and then Mafalda told another story about cats. José has new furniture. That's about it.

After recess I settle down at the mainly boys' table and work with Iolanda, Bernardo, and Edmar, interrupted meanwhile by various individual requests (from Mafalda, Jéssica, Sátia, and Cláudia), and I even do a LOCO with Adelino. As Oury said *connected to 10 antennas...* We are surprised when the clock tells us we have to get ready for the plan evaluation. I admire the calm with which everything happens: they sit quietly (!) until I return their card work and folders, there are no stapler battles.

But then listening to each other is a little more difficult.

Soraia is a disaster: she doesn't contribute anything to the plan, but says she did a good job. I interject – I can't help myself – to say that I don't understand how she can lie so blatantly to herself.

The other interpretations of the plan are more peaceful.

The big surprise is the Council. We have the visit from Isabel, the librarian. Backed by Guida and Sátia, I have everyone sitting comfortably around the table. The meeting will last 30 minutes and there are only a few 'hot butts' in the last 5.

We opened with 5 complaints from José about Iolanda and 4 from Iolanda about José. Their comments were limited to Iolanda's complaints about José taking her pencil and, conversely, José's complaints about Iolanda kicking him. Cláudia asked to speak, saying that Iolanda can be very unpleasant and that she kicks

people without them seeing. Furthermore, Sátia continued, there are boys who hit, then write about it in the diary, and then hit again. She warned them not to write in pencil because Iolanda happens to erase it.

Luís also asks to speak and says he knows Iolanda annoys José. Iolanda listens and says nothing more. I say that I think what's clear is that they can't be next to each other. They agree. We ask who wants to switch places. Among several, there's Isaías who volunteers. I say I don't agree, since Isaías is the only boy at the girls' table. He laughs. Iolanda chooses Andreia to switch places with.

Next, Andreia talks about Adelino; he unbalanced the chair (he's always rocking) and hurt her. I ask her if she accepts Adelino's apology. She accepts, Adelino formalises it, and we all applaud.

Cláudia enrolled Indira because she kept calling her while we were working. Indira justified herself, saying she wanted a locker marker. Cláudia remembers me saying one only needs to ask permission for the coloured paper. Everyone remembers that.

Indira doesn't know why she put José in the diary. Mafalda talks about Adelino hitting her in the mouth with a piece of wood during recess, which hurt her a lot. Luís tries to say it's not true, even though Adelino had already admitted it. Cláudia intervenes to say she doesn't agree with Luís defending Adelino in that way. Adelino apologises.

Cláudia enrolled Guida in the diary because of a problem with borrowing materials that ended in a hard kick. Guida apologises.

Edmar and Bernardo put Adelino in the diary because he threw Cuisenaire rods at them while they were working on the mathematical puzzle LOCO. Adelino said it's true and apologises.

Adelino, in fact, is still very much a baby. He even rolls around on the floor at the end of the meeting.
In the "we like" section, we have a note from Adelino: he thanks Luís for the help he gave him.
Cláudia wrote about Luís. After some time, she discovers she wrote in the "we like" section because there wasn't enough space in the "we don't like" section. And it's because Luís laughed when she beat up Adelino. We don't quite understand where the conversation is going, and I suggest that perhaps it's best to forget everything.
In the "I propose" section, there are belts to be assigned: Bernardo yellow for writing, Aida and Jessica yellow for behaviour. When I announce green for behaviour for Andreia, there is strong opposition from all the leaders. They overwhelmingly vote against it. I say that green is for those who work and move around without disturbing others. And I ask them to justify their vote: "*Does she disturbs you when you're working?*" No one objects anymore...
Isabel talks about our last visit at the library and explains why things went wrong. Most of the leaders agree that the last visit didn't go well. I mention that we were thinking of suggesting that the group stop going to the library together, because it had shown that it didn't work.
The group agree to abide by the library rules. We voted that Isabel and I have the right to decide to prevent access to the library without going through the Council.
In the end, we voted on a proposal to only use scrap paper to make confetti.
Next, we have a free afternoon: a peaceful end to the day concludes a peaceful week.

We've grown a little again.
Some (imaginary?) rats that seem to have been seen at the school give us two days off.

Wednesday, February 2nd

There were no dead rats in the poison boxes in our classroom.
When I paste the texts into Sátia's notebook, I discover one she wrote at home. I tell her I liked the text. She's overjoyed.
Joy at seeing each other again and a little confusion. We agree on a writing assignment after *Read, tell and show,* plan work, and then in the afternoon the presentation of the project on cell phones, a problem, and then another plan work. Guida, Cláudia, and Sátia immediately announce that in the afternoon they're going to play with the 'Barbies' ("*It's been a long time, Pascal!*").
In the *Read, tell and show* moment, nothing of great importance happened. They saw each other, played, Adelino spent two days at José's house, Jéssica saw Cláudia who didn't see Jéssica. But they started each speaker giving the floor during *Read, tell and show.*
When I said I sold 10 class newspapers in Tomar [Central South of Portugal], they are impressed: 500 escudos for the class fund!
In the afternoon, *The cell phones* present an excellent research project! Of course, they know what they're talking about (at least Sátia, Jéssica, and Cláudia do. Isaías and Iolanda are just strolling around).
Adelino, Luís, and (sometimes) Edmar are a nuisance; José is daydreaming; Guida is chatting; in short, they are NOT interested.
I'm very annoyed! I tell them that I think it's inconsiderate to the group that worked so well. Nothing done. I decide to insist: I say

that I'll take the work evaluation form to correct it, and that tomorrow I'll show them what the disruption means.
They grumble, but the report next day is a confirmation for me and a surprise for them. (Luís, and even Sátia and Jessica themselves have weak work; 9 among them have even insufficient work; only Aida, Mafalda, Andreia, and Cláudia present reasonable work. It's worth noting that all the questions were multiple choice and all directly linked to the information in the work. Aida was the only one to consult the project book for information she didn't know by heart.)
The day draws to a close with games, crafts, drawing, and the usual work. It feels like the room had to be 'rediscovered'.

Thursday, February 3rd

I celebrated victory prematurely and I could have predicted it through the project presentation.
Today was a particularly difficult day. We're back to September times...
It all started well: a resource team, because the on-call team arrived late. Then came *Read, tell and show* with an interesting story: José tells about going fishing with his father. There are many questions: Is it fish to eat? Did you like it? Did you catch a lot? Where was it? Was it on a beach or in the sea? etc. The rest of *Read, tell and show* teaches me a few more things about family building. They think I have few daughters – only two! – and they compare with their families. Sátia talks about her sisters, her brothers, those who live in Cape Verde, those who live here, those who are at her mother's, those who are her father's friend's, those who are her "aunt's." She

bursts into laughter because of something Isaías told her: that if her mother has another baby, her sister will have to kill her to keep the baby. Strange humor.

Then I propose a writing workshop, which is enthusiastically accepted by many.

Isaiah is having trouble at first. He wants to write about the boy in the sea. I ask who lives in the sea. He doesn't know. I suggest the fish. He replies, *"Is that so, Pascal?"*. Jessica confirms. Isaiah says that then the fish can be the boy's friends. *"How do they talk?"* I ask. *"I don't know,"* he says. *"Have you ever seen a fish swimming?"* No, he has not. Jessica has. *"Then, what does the fish do with their mouth?" "Ooh, ooh,"* Jessica says. Isaiah says that then the fish say ooh, ooh, ooh, and that means *"do you want to play with me?"* But then the shark comes (*"Does the shark also live in the sea, Pascal?"*) and eats all the little fish, and then the boy has to play alone...

Despite the dramatic content of the text, we arrived at recess in good spirits.

In the afternoon things suddenly get complicated. At first we continue with the plan work, and there are no problems while the female leaders make dolls and the male leaders draw Batmans.

But when I propose a problem that involves finding half of an amount, all hell breaks loose. Opposition, *"This is too difficult," "We don't know," "Oh Pascal, we're tired,"* and so on. Afterwards I feel sorry for some of the children, including Sátia, Edmar, Luís(!) and Mafalda, who try hard to follow the reasoning but can't because I can't keep the others attentive either. Obviously, the problem was too difficult for many, and I didn't realise this in time. As things drag on until five to three, I send them out, without tidying up or reading the plan.

They leave the room with their tails between their legs... and I confess it's the first day in a long time that I haven't left singing... did I want to be too much of a teacher? But the damage is done, I can't go back. Meanwhile, while I'm showed how annoyed I was, Cláudia delicately closed the classroom door after a *"Excuse us"* to whoever is in the hallway. Earlier in the afternoon she had told me she wanted to stay with me for 1000 weeks.
And the day had started so well...

Friday, February 4th

Today is another day, and it's going very differently. There's a lot of *Read, tell and show* time, after knowing Assunção[9], whom they immediately liked, as often when they have visitors. Before the day started, I had already read the story with the letters swapped from “Rittle Led Hiding Rood" outside to anyone who wanted to listen. Sátia wants a photocopy. In the *Read, tell and show* session — where increasingly it's the presenters giving floor, and it's going well — I'll tell them that, since I was that upset yesterday, I went to Jumbo-store to clear my head and organise my thoughts, instead of going straight home. That's how I found and bought books on sale, good for the classroom library. They get very excited about the books I show, and Sátia's comment is: *“If so, you can get angry more often, Pascal.”*
We have an ambitious work plan: *Read, tell and show,* presentation of the work on the computer, math problem, plan and evaluation,

[9] A friend coming to know the children and the class so she can later record a short video about integrating computers as a work tool in the classroom.

Council and free afternoon (plants). José recounts in great detail how he built a scooter with Edmar, using wheels from a Jumbo shopping cart. Edmar shows the medals he won in chess tournaments. There are two participation medals and one for 3rd place.

The project "the computer" is well presented: Iolanda has a very good grasp of the part she wrote, Bernardo explains the capabilities of the LOGO turtle very well and what he knows *"about the computer's numbers (0 and 1)*", which leaves Luís incredulous and leads me to say that we will return to the subject later. Guida, clever and quick-witted as always, talks about the first computer.

Cíntia feels a little awkward about her part because she can't read everything she wrote. But, with some help, she explains that the oldest computer was the abacus, that later calculating machines were invented, and only then computers. The other information is in the project book...

Next, we all gathered around the classroom computer to see how the turtle worked. The children on the project explained again how they created the program and then described it part by part, from the road till the car[10]. The others found it interesting.

It takes about ten minutes for everyone to be out of the room, with a team that didn't properly control the distribution of the bread, which suddenly leads to a shortage. Sátia and Jéssica come to deliver the second loaf they brought...

At five minutes to noon we start tidying up, stapling the plan

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[10] They programmed a scene in LOGO depicting a road with houses, where two cars are traveling in opposite directions.

together — it's the first week there's no doubt about what to do with the plan and the exercise card sheets —, we do the evaluation in 10 minutes (we're under time pressure) and the general feeling is that the work wasn't very good and that the week was worse than the previous ones.
The Council is going well.
Adelino complains about Jessica hitting him violently. He asks Jessica to work alone for a day, which she accepts without complaint. She chooses Monday. Some complaints from José-Iolanda-José continue, but the matter is quickly resolved with mutual apologies.
Cláudia forgives Isaías for some tricks he played on her. Adelino is deprived of the computer for a week because he keeps typing random letters on others texts, appearing behind them when they are typing on the computer.
A warning also for Guida, Iolanda, and Isaiah?
Adelino had things to say about Andreia, but since she's not here, the matter is postponed.
We don't "like" anything this week; in "I propose," a change of belt for Mafalda (from green to blue in the division) and Bernardo will help Edmar manage the games in the room.
Then come the regular proposals for changing responsibilities: Cláudia, along with Luís, volunteers for the computer; Jéssica wants to take charge of the closet, as does Isaías; Aida is looking for replacement; and Indira wants to leave the clippings.
The group is on the move.
The meeting ends on a slightly hectic note. We clear the tables and get to work on our free afternoon: The "Barbies" are back...

meanwhile, they're going to create two 3D collages representing weddings: one with children already born, the other with children yet to be born. We're approaching spring. And everyone's talking about Valentine's Day.
At the end of the day we tidied things up and left feeling quite organized.

Monday, February 7th

We start with a team that lacks commitment. It's just José and Edmar who do the work, since Luís comes in later. During the day, I don't see the team anymore...
In the *Read, tell and show* section, there are 14 registered participants. Most are there to recount what they saw and did over the weekend. There's no particularly important news. What is important is that they have already developed a good ability to give and take the floor, and that there is more attention paid to what is being recounted. The most distracted are Isaías, Guida, Adelino, Luís, José, and Aida.
We forget that Jessica was supposed to work alone one day; she herself suggested to do so tomorrow.
I explain that there's a lot of work to be done for the class newspaper, so that it can be delivered on time. We have to finish it by Wednesday. The enthusiasm isn't very high.
After *Read, tell and show* we return to the problem of halves.
After recess we also fill out our personal plan, and we start working individually. I correct texts with Luís, Edmar, Sátia, and Mafalda, texts that go into their notebooks (I print them right away). I notice out of the corner of my eye that there is a lot of reading, which is

good, there is plenty of work for the correspondence, and then I start having difficulties with Indira. These difficulties continue throughout the day and explode into a violent conflict in the afternoon, during which she becomes extremely rude.
The 'little ants', on the other hand, work without me even noticing...
At lunchtime we'll get the essentials ready so we can do some writing work later.
The text is by Andréa. There's a very heated discussion about games for boys or girls. Cláudia exaggerates a bit.
Since there is little time after the writing work, the afternoon plan does not really get going and some confusion ensues. Things eventually got sorted out, but then it is already time to tidy up. They leave the room somewhat disorganised, partly because the team hadn't functioned very well. Mafalda asked to help make paints and then leaves me alone, in a hurry because she has to get a ride home with Aida.
And a tiring day came to an end.

Tuesday, February 8th

Today's work goes better. Less *Read, tell and show* and without any major highlights. Mafalda's father got drunk, some watched others playing, Cláudia explored the garden, Sátia went shopping. I have to find a way to turn things around and encourage other types of interaction. Should I bring things to show?
After recess we have plan work; several students ask me to correct the texts they wrote. I work with Adilson, José, Mafalda and Bernardo. Cláudia, Sátia, Aida andIolanda work very little and make a lot of noise. I have to reprimand them until they get tired and

actually start working. I also have to keep an eye on Adelino and Luís, who are very busy with Batman and not very focused on the exercise cards. Jessica gets confused between completed worksheets and worksheets to be completed, and I suspect she's still copying answers.
Sátia comes to ask me about the test, but then she doesn't know which one. I tell her that when she finishes a series of work cards she can take the test for that series, but she's a little confused. I need to explain it better.
Ultimately, I don't have much support from the other team members to clean the room.

Wednesday, February 9th

If only every day were like today!
Read, tell and show *Pico Bello.* We pay close attention to the stories, which include trips to Soraia's ball game, Edmar's friend who was hospitalised, and their usual playful interactions.
Next, a moment of gathering news for the class paper. It's funny to see what the children value in and out of the classroom. The letter to Oeiras, the games and the posters, but also the accident on the expressway (details in newspaper #5).
We spent the whole afternoon at the library. Isabel started by telling a story, and it went very well: *the girl who wanted a cat.*
We calmly assessed the plan, and it was, as Cláudia said, a spectacular day!

Thursday, February 10th

The day isn’t as quiet as yesterday, but it is another good day at

work.
We start with a somewhat lacklustre *Read, tell and show* session. Nothing very interesting, and we're already nearing the end of the week, so there's not much to talk about. Today's team isn't very well organised. Rodrigo makes an effort, but Isaías gives up quickly.
I propose a one-on-one letter to the correspondents as a writing workshop, which is accepted. There will be also plan work, prioritising the class newspaper, then we will coordinate new projects, and the day will end with the extended plan.
We received a letter from Assunção by electronic mail.
We agreed that Jessica would reply. When we are a little calmer and back at work, another package arrives, this time with the postman. It comes from the Swiss embassy[11].
There is a kind response to the observations made by my pupils. I quickly translate the main letter, which is in French, and we distribute the free posters to each one. We have another interruption, almost until lunchtime this time.
Sátia says: today is definitely correspondence day! It's us, Assunção, and Switzerland.
After lunch, we brainstorm project hypotheses. I explain that *"the 'Batmen'* " have to finish their work before starting another, and that this is also the case for Aida. Then I ask for ideas. Sátia suggests 'dwarfs,' Jessica too. Then Cíntia suggests 'books,' Guida wants that too, and Jessica wants to change. Mafalda suggests 'photocopiers,' Bernardo 'cameras.' When Soraia joins this group, Bernardo wants to change to 'photocopiers.' He even suggests 'posters,' but I cut

[11] See further: *December – January: Switzerland*

him off; I think he only had the Swiss embassy giveaway in mind. Adilson suggests 'radios,' José 'sound systems.' I suggest they get together. Luís suggests 'Tarzan,' but I cut him off. I say that he first has to show he is capable of doing a proper project. Iolanda suggests "clothes" (I say it might be interesting to see past and present fashions) and Edmar says he wants that too. Cláudia reacts violently and with laughter: a boy in the clothes department! I say that some of the great designers are men and that it is surely a subject for girls and boys, but Edmar doesn't want to anymore. He join José. Isaiah suggests "the three little pigs," but I say no, he suggests "the pig," and I accept. Rodrigo, who takes care of a real pig at home, also chooses that theme. Sátia switches to the book group. I'm happy. Then she wants to switch to the "Santa Claus" group, where Cláudia has infiltrated, I don't know exactly why. I'm less happy. I tell Aida that she has time to think about what she wants to do next; Indira doesn't know what to choose.

At the end of the day, with Isabel, I make a small diagram, where some absentees are missing, and for now, this is what the diagram can look like:

Books Sátia(?), Cíntia, Guida, Jessica, Indira (?) Proposal: Papyrus, Parchment, Paper China, Gutenberg, the Church, and the Printing Press Structure of a book.	Watches Luis, Adelino Proposal: Compare digital time with analog time; Building clocks out of cardboard; to observe a pendulum; to make a sundial.	Pig and pork Rodrigo, Isaiah Proposal: The pig family What do they eat? What does "piglet" mean? Why do we raise pigs? Pork	Photocopiers and cameras Mafalda and Bernardo, Soraia as a "supporter" Proposal: Photo and writing, Photo and copy; light and image; To make a camera

Clothes: Yolanda Proposal: Fashion then and now, from a collection at the	Radio José, Adilson, Edmar Proposal: Under study	Santa Claus Aida, Cláudia and Satia(?) Proposal: Finish the job	obscura; Taking photos with a disposable camera How a camera works

All this with the commitment to first finish off the "Batmen" stories, for Soraia not to behave like a pest towards the other two in the group, to clarify the situation with Cláudia, and to try to convince Sátia to stay in the book group. We propose that we work with three groups at a time, with the other three remaining in the library but doing plan work, including expression workshops.

There's a very unpleasant situation, first with Luís and a balloon, which forces me to become responsible for Luís, because that's what we agreed about the balloons and Carnival games. Then, with Cláudia, who disregarded my decision not to have a checkers game because she has disputes about organizing the pairs. She just took the game out of the drawer, without further ado, to the astonishment of the others and myself. We'll have a tough meeting tomorrow!

Friday, February 11th

The *Read, tell and show* activity leads Cláudia to talk about a visit, Luís to show the door key because he doesn't have after-school activities today and is going home, Sátia to tell a story about beds, where her father put all the beds together and they all slept together, and Mafalda with a great story about an abandoned dog that ended up at her house. Indira went to the park, Iolanda stood in front of a closed house because everyone was sleeping inside, Bernardo won a yo-yo and a suit at Galp, Aida went out to dinner in

Cacém, and Andreia received a ring from her mother (stepmother).
Jessica enters after the *Read, tell and show* session looking like she hasn't slept. Isaiah is walking around with a balloon in his hand and causes an initial conflict when he lets it burst.
Soon after, when everyone is already in pairs, with elastic bands and a geoboard (and without conflicts), ready to work, Cláudia has a major bossy outburst, which leads her to be taken to the director's office to calm down, in a 'comfortable' chair.
However, we started working with the geoboard.
After recess, the whole class is together, and I used the break to talk to Cláudia about the difference between having the freedom to work, being responsible, and bossing others around.
The plan is relaxed; I work with Aida, Iolanda, Cláudia, and Jessica, and Daniela takes care of Adilson and Bernardo. We do the plan reading from noon to 12:15. There are still many children who feel they are working poorly. Sometimes unfairly. I think Adelino, Isaías, Soraia, and Rodrigo still don't quite know what it means to work well or to work poorly.
In the end, the Council is proving to be less problematic than I thought. Several issues cannot be addressed because two of the most vocal complainers are absent: José and Soraia.
We deal with minor conflicts that don't require much explanation, with a very attentive group. A new rule emerges: *No eating in the classroom except during birthday parties.*
Luís concludes by saying, "You still haven't stuck the yellow dot

on,"[12] when I remind him of his behaviour, which has very little to do with the colour of his belt. Is affixing the sticker more important than communicating the decision? We agreed that he would be my responsibility for the work plan next week.
Then we have the discussion with Cláudia about the difference between giving orders and being responsible. A difficult discussion with a bit of whining in between.
Congratulations to Aida for changing colour, to Cíntia for helping Andreia and doing a good job (written by Andreia). Congratulations also to José who is growing, but who isn't here today.
Free afternoon.
I see Edmar almost all afternoon on the computer writing texts, Adelino, Luís, Adilson, Bernardo, Rodrigo and Andreia folding class newspapers with me, Isaías, Adelino, Luís, Cláudia and Bernardo playing checkers and Cláudia making math worksheets (!). Adelino, at the end of the afternoon, went to work on the math book with me, and the others went to play in the corner of the library at school and with their families.

Monday, February 14th

Read, tell and show was the only activity we didn't finish. I cancelled it because of the noise that occurred in the middle of it.
Then we read the class newspaper, with good results: word searches and decomposing other words.
We start plan work after recess. The Monday sermons are effective,

[12] He's referring to the small self-adhesive tags we use for the two-entry chart where we record everyone's belts.

and generally the students are working. I still have difficulties with the slowness and resistance of learners like José, Iolanda, and Soraia, but things work more or less with the others.
I settle down at the tables in the back of the room and work with the syllable box* with Adilson, Jessica, Mafalda, and at a certain point, even Cláudia comes to take a look and wants to join in.
The afternoon starts off more complicated because we have to coordinate things, and that's always more difficult. After three attempts, I can explain the work plan for the projects, and the various groups prepare their project contracts.
For the rest of the afternoon (starting at 2:15 pm) we do plan work, except for Iolanda and Andreia who sneak into the classroom library to play.

Tuesday, February 15th

The *Read, tell and show* session is going very well today. Calm. They are listening to each other after I said I would cut the *Read, tell and show* session short whenever I do not have the necessary composure.
Next, we have a good geoboard activity session.
During plan work, which starts well, I have a heated discussion with Adelino because he still doesn't know how to use the building's numbers. It becomes clear that his constant chatter is hindering his work, and he doesn't seem to care.
I'm at an impasse: should I increase the amount of individual work so I can do more individual work, knowing that some won't do nothing when I am not with them? Or should I try to invest in group sessions, because, even though they don't listen, they consider that

is what school is about...?
Jessica is writing the reply for Assunção.
In the afternoon, at the library, the popular story of the monkey with the cut-off tail captures their attention well for a quarter of an hour.
The group on camera and about pigs starts off well. The group working on books has some hesitations, but then things start to flow.
The effort with Batman's group makes them finish the job. Eureka!
The "Santa Clauses" are "on the move," but I didn't quite understand Sátia and Cláudia's role in all of this. It remains to be seen what Cláudia will do next.
By late afternoon, the tidying up is chaotic again.
After class, I organize another box of syllables.

Wednesday, February 16th

Before they begin their day, I adjust the poster outside our classroom, which recounts our interaction with the Swiss embassy.
An extensive list of *Read, tell and show*. Adilson went to sleep at his uncle's house and couldn't sleep. Iolanda talks about a bunk bed, and Guida, who hadn't said anything, frowns eye bows. I ask why her expression is like that, and she says she doesn't know what the word means, Iolanda explains quickly. Mafalda talks about the two turtles she has at home. She can't name them because she does not know which is the female and which is the male. José proudly shows off a toy motorcycle he brought, but then talks about a visit to an uncle. Isaías comes to show off — very embarrassed — the new denim jumpsuit he received.

Later I'll explain the idea of combining the work the collective and the individual work proposals in the same time slots, so that everyone can do the mandatory work and than go on with plan work, depending on how much help they require from me. The first day of this new measure goes well. The work functions reasonably well, except for Guida, Iolanda, and Isaías's work. Soraia is starting to produce a little more.
Later in the afternoon, they showed some interest in the writing workshop, especially some children who had been less involved until now. Working with the syllable box is a big hit with Adilson, Mafalda, and Adelino, and later it is fun with Andreia, who knows more than she shows, Cíntia, and Cláudia. Jessica, who wasn't there in the morning, showed up after lunch. She is looking after her baby sister and comes to search for milk because the baby was crying.
I just had to manage a few conflicts with the checkers players and the girls who were doing hair.
At ten minutes to three we started tidying up, and even before the doorbell rang, we had the living room nice and tidy.

Thursday, February 17th

The *Read, tell and show* moment is becoming a marvel of information. Luís recounts that when he and Iolanda were going to school, she bumped into a lady because she was distracted. Aida starts to 'work' seriously at the restaurant. She arranges plates and cutlery and helps clean the kitchen. Mafalda develops the stories of the turtles: they play together and raise and lower the stones they have in the aquarium. Sátia spent some time at her father's work office while waiting for the car to be fixed.

After *Read, tell and show* I propose we continue working on presence maps and do another writing workshop. This will be followed by project work and independent study; the afternoon begins with Cuisenaire rods and ends with plan work. We're off to a good start.
In the afternoon, working with the Cuisenaire rods becomes a bit strenuous. I suggest we skip that part and continue with what was left undone this morning, emphasising that the plan applies to everyone. There's some confusion surrounding Aida, who's picking up large sheets of paper to make masks and wigs, which leads Guida, Cláudia, Sátia, and Iolanda into the same games.
I'm forcing Iolanda to do something else, which will cause an argument all afternoon.
Edmar writes another lengthy text on the computer; José follows suit, but writes with many typos, and then Iolanda writes as well. The promised research with Aida remains undone.
At the end of the day, there's a lot of chaos when tidying up works.
The day ends quite calmly.

Friday, February 18th

Today, there is national public service strike for (or against?) something, I didn't quite understand. We have the school to ourselves. 15 out of 19 show up (I've already given up counting on Sandro...). José isn't here, he told his mother he didn't have class (and his mother didn't ask for any paper to confirm, she sent him of to his grandmother, I find out from one of the staff members, nor is Soraia, who is going to the doctor (sic!), neither Rodrigo, who must have stayed with his cousins because they weren't coming to school

as their teacher joins the strike, nor Bernardo, who yesterday afternoon came back to ask if there was class today, but who in the meantime didn't show up.

The *Read, tell and show* segment is long. Edmar went to his aunt's house, and there are several questions about whether he slept there. Cláudia asks Aida to say that her mother went to Makro and bought many *Pringles®.* Mafalda has a story about a man who drank too much. But I didn't understand the subtlety, if there was any. Jessica mentions another drunk, I know that he is a real one, from the neighbourhood, who did somersaults on the floor. A discussion ensues about the people in the neighbourhood, what leads to a conversation about the disabled children from the area. They talk about a Flávio and an Adelino; I gather from the conversation that Flávio must be the boy who comes to visit me occasionally in the classroom after schooltime. Guida says he is her cousin. But I don't know if we were talking about the same person. Aida says her father placed an ad in the newspaper to find people to work at the restaurant, especially since one of the employees who was always drunk had been fired. I ask what the job entails, and she says it's working in the kitchen: peeling potatoes and such. She mentions that she also sometimes peels garlic and helps clean lettuce.

During the morning, Andreia arrives with her stepmother. The stepmother is very excited because she went to court yesterday, and everyone agreed Andreia was doing very well; they had papers from the teacher that spoke well of her, but the social worker said she also has to participate in the outings. Then, before I can stop her from talking in front of the child, she says: "*But look, sir, as soon*

as he spoke about outings, the girl started throwing a tantrum everywhere. It's like the after-school program, but now I've already said she has to go, because I don't want to lose the minimum income because of her refusal. This must be from the drugs her mother gave her, poor thing, and which are still in her head."

When the two of us enter the room, Andreia said, "Hey Pascal, my mom misunderstood, because I want to go to the after-school program, that's where Adelino, Luís, and Edmar are."

In *Read, tell and show* she recounts how she made her stepmother miss the train when they returned from Cascais.

Adilson says he watched "Olhó Vídeo" [A TV program passing amateur videos] with an uncle, and Luís was playing games with his uncles.

Next, I suggest a short session working to register findings with the Cuisenaire Rods on the grid.

The one's who didn't write anything yesterday have the possibility for registering their text during the writing workshop today; the others will work on their personal plan.

This continues after the break, which gives me the opportunity to help Iolanda with a text, Aida with division worksheets, Adelino with a +/- worksheet, while Luís focuses on computer support and Daniela, Andreia, and Isaías work with syllables. However, the notebooks[13] are beginning to show their usefulness.

I've started reading a book with Adelino, a book we haven't finished

[13] I bought a small notebook, like a pocket diary, for each of the learners, so they could create a personalised mini-dictionary, in which I write down the words they ask for in their free writing assignments.

yet.
We agree to swap the Council meeting with the plan evaluation, because Sátia and Cláudia said they might not come in the afternoon.
In the council meeting, I sit between Indira and Cláudia. Mafalda begins with a general explanation of the state of the room: running, kicking, involuntary punches because sometimes everyone is running around. When I ask if she wants anything, she says she just wants to talk about it because she thinks things are bad.
Next, the diary mentions a discussion to have about José: he's not here, so we can't talk about him, but we suspect he's not coming because it's Friday and he knows there are criticisms about him in the Council. It's been two weeks in a row now... and it has happened before he counted on the fact that whoever who made the note on the diary wouldn't remember what it was about 15 days later. We arrange to talk to him and about him on Monday morning (José, who seems poised to become an 'interesting' character, is already exploiting loopholes in the law: not showing up for calls and disappearing before being summoned...).
There's a discussion about Luís' attitude when he's on the team, in which I'm the main participant, and then there's a strong warning to Cláudia about her aggressiveness (again...).
Today, Sátia participates with interest and, in general, the discussions are very well-organized.
In the "we liked" column of the newspaper, Cláudia appears again, for her reading aloud to others, and Cíntia also appears for her help.
Adilson proposes himself to be in charge of the blackboard, which is accepted. We forgot about Guida's desire to become yellow in

behaviour. And we also forgot my suggestion about assigning seats in the classroom.
Lunchtime is very long today because there are only 12 of us eating in the canteen. We have time to talk more calmly. I learn that Indira's father died in a car accident, under a collapsing building, when she was little. Her mother is alive, but she doesn't see her often.
After lunch, Cláudia and Sátia show up. Jéssica ran home to tell her mother that she ate at school after all, and together we'll take care of plan evaluation. This takes about half an hour. Cláudia also says that there's a proposal for us all to go to Quinta de Sales, and I say it's a great idea, but I don't have parental permission to do go out and I promise to ask for a kind of permanent permission next week.
Then we'll play ball and jump rope outside. It takes a good half hour for them to get organised. Five balls on the roof mean someone has to go get them. Cláudia tries, but she's scared and goes back, Luis too, then Isaías manages to do it. Great day for him. We play hand and foot tag when suddenly a big fight breaks out between Luis and Isaías. We can't calm them down and a long conversation about behaviour colours and diaries doesn't help. Isaías disappears, shortly after Luis too ("*I'm going to smash his face in!*") and a little later they both come back and start to play together but Luis soon after confidences me: "I already hit Isaías."
"*Poor man's psychotherapy, a punch in the face,*" dixit Fernand Oury.

Monday, February 21st

As it is every Monday, the *Read, tell and show* segment is lengthy. I announce that Pythagoras (my daughter's rabbit) is dying.

After the *Read, tell and show* session, we resume the Council so we can talk to José about the criticisms he has been receiving. He will have to work alone during this week.
In the afternoon, I ask for help in creating some posters about our work for the school's exhibition on communication. There is a lot of enthusiasm and some participation.
As the afternoon progresses, they tire and switch from writing to drawing.
We get ready on time and leave things well. A very calm day, despite a weak team (Isaías and Rodrigo), and many problems outside the room (broken heads, delayed lunches, fainting vice-directors,...).

Wednesday, February 23

We are in crisis. There has been no *Read, tell and show* for two days because of the noise.
Yesterday we read texts, chose a text, and organized the work: Luís, Edmar, Sátia, Jéssica, and Soraia. Then, things didn't go very well on the plan work. In the afternoon, at the library, I had close attention to the story, after much insistence. The project work on the photocopier and camera went well. The work on the books, not so much. The little pig grew (with a balloon and papier-mâché). The others did arts and crafts with Catarina, our new library acquisition. The tidying up was chaotic. We didn't do a plan evaluation.
Today is even more complicated. A rude remark from Sátia makes me cut the *Read, tell and show* activity again. The writing work goes very smoothly; the plan is acceptable. In the afternoon, the math problem is interrupted by a conversation between my pupils and the director. Indira should supposedly have smoked. After

developing the subject, it turnes out that Indira after all hadn't smoked, but picked up a cigarette butt from the ground. One thing leeds to another, and the children mention that it's the adults who make them do things, threatening them. They also talked about drugs, which an adult cousin had supposedly brought here to sell...
Then comes the chaos. The plan work is very confusing, with shouting and running around the room. Adilson and Adelino get caught in the crossfire, and I get very upset. In the middle of all this, there are altercations with Indira, four times today, and altercations between José and Cláudia, who, we know, has a very complicated and difficult relationship with him — and with some reason, one might say.
Sátia and Mafalda make the paints themselves and succeed.
At the end of the day, we leave in a state of chaos.
So, where was the problem? I don't quite understand. It seems like things are working, but they're not: the engine isn't engaged in life, Freinet would have said. But how do I discover the life that interests them? That life is difficult.

Thursday, February 24th

We return to calmer waters. *Read, tell and show* in a lengthy session, they have a lot to catch up on. Cíntia is going to eat pizza and has a long interrogation about it, Cláudia has a cousin who had his birthday, Jéssica has already chosen her Carnival outfit, Luís had a cousin sleeping over at his house, Mafalda has a great story about

her cousin's dots[14], and the questions include “what colour is the dot,” which leads Luís to remember that a cousin of his won a car with those dots. Guida doesn’t have much news but likes to speak up, Indira went to Jumbo with her ‘mother’ who is her grandmother, Andreia has a new skirt (the court after all works...). Adilson got a fright because he thought the gas was on, but it was his mother who had already turned on the heater. José was hit in the face with yogurt by a little cousin, and Soraia talks about a man who “did ugly things" (I recorded).

After this long conversation, the writing workshop is productive.

After recess, the going to the library is only interrupted by a conflict between two boys from other classes, which I find myself obliged to resolve. Afterwards, it's time to work. Adelino and Luís, delighted with the real construction of a sundial, work with the drill, the screwdriver, the scissors, and the Stanley knife.

The work is almost done.

Meanwhile, the radio-project isn't making much progress, and José finds himself forced to work practically alone, while Adilson and his colleague do almost nothing.

In the afternoon, a good time for Cuisenaire-Pythagoras.

The plan is going well: I gain respect from most of the boys, crushing them in consecutive checker games. Isaías even finds himself losing with only one of my pieces captured.

We got everything ready and I distribute the authorization request

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[14] At the time, one of the private television channels wanted to build audience loyalty by giving prizes to those who proved they watched the channel in question. The DOT was part of the proof.

form for upcoming outings.
And in the midst of all this, the schooldirector and I managed to catch the suspected drug dealer during lunchtime.

Friday, February 25th

The *Read, tell and show* went well today, as did the Council by the way! The trip to Quinta de Sales was a good pretext for this.
Andreia received two new shirts, one of which she showed (the court order is still in effect — she also has the signed authorisation, and she enjoyed the outgoing). Cláudia says her mother saw me. Jessica announces her sister will dress as a fishmonger on Carnival (which isn't a surprise since her mother is a fishmonger), which makes Cláudia say: "*Damn, the only thing that girl talks about is Carnival!*" Sátia finally managed to see a doctor to treat her lip[15].
Bernardo's computer is already fixed. Aida received a DOT from BP gas station. They argue again about the colour of it. Indira was at her aunt's house. Mafalda tells a story about her cat, and José has a dog: a Bulldog (in fact that is the only dog that suits José...) and Adilson talks about the girls who make noise at night.
After the *Read, tell and show* session, we collectively correct a text made by Aida, and then I present a math problem.
The plan work, then, is weaker. But since the 'cracks' did a lot of work during the week, and the others did what they could, I'll dedicate myself to the sundial with Adelino and Luís and some onlookers, and then I work on some exercise cards with Adilson, Adelino, and Bernardo.

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[15] Injured and infected for several days now.

The plan is evaluated after some initial difficulties with organisation and tidying up (many people were in the library reading and didn't want to stop and tidy up).
In the afternoon we have a very long Council meeting, lasting 45 minutes, without any problems: Quinta de Sales is calling.
We also have a long list of minor problems and complaints about small aggressions, most of which have been forgiven.
When we get to José, the scenario changes. We discuss groping again also out of the classroom, and a new rule emerges: "*Anyone who gropes girls loses the right to recess and has to stay with the teachers until the Council decides otherwise*"[16].
Indira will be deprived of library and painting corner one day. Luís and Cláudia consider that sometimes I get angry with them when it is others provoke them. I counter-argue that this might be true, but on the other hand, I also don't see in the diary what happened and who provoked them... we shake hands.
My three proposals are accepted: we return to 5 groups of 4; the extended periods for work governed by the plan are secured; those who do not use them for work will have a work plan developed under direct supervision of the teacher. Rodrigo resumes José's responsibility, leaving me to propose another responsibility to José.

Monday, February 28th

Read, tell and show until exhaustion. Aida's father scraped his finger

[16] New incidents will force harsher measures. I explained that the Council cannot resolve everything – since its legal space is confined to the walls of the classroom.

(and tore a vein) while playing, and that news is worth six questions. Sátia had her cousin over and played with her, which is also worth six questions. Mafalda played with a friend, seven questions. Edmar went to Continente supermarket, three questions. Iolanda was taking a shower when the power went out, but she wasn't scared because of the candle. Today, she came with 25 hair bunches! Luís' cousin cut his hair and fixed his bicycle, and Luís is very happy. Seven more questions. Andreia presents a new look, with braids à la Pippi Longstocking. The simple fact that Jessica saw Luís entitles her to eight questions. Jessica's sister tried to ride a bicycle, but couldn't. Bernardo is off to Benfica on Saturday for a meeting with first division footballers. Indira went to Jumbo, no questions. Adilson washed his hair and face and considers this news worth reporting. Cláudia's mother's car was stolen. They recovered it, but many parts are broken.

Then we collectively correct one of Iolanda's texts, and we finished right at recess time.

In the afternoon, after the necessary time to calm down (15 minutes), we tidy up the classroom and go to the kitchen to bake a cake for the correspondents' visit.

We had first organised the work, and most of the children follow it to the letter. Only Cláudia, as always, wants to do everything. Isaías does whatever he picks up along the way.

The cleaning is going well, even though I have to constantly tell and supervise what everyone is doing throughout the afternoon. Here, there isn't much autonomy yet.

Five to three, the cakes are in the oven, the students have left, and the classroom is clean. Not bad, considering it's the last Monday

before Carnival...

Tuesday, February 29th

We remain at peace, amidst an increasingly disorganised school – Carnival?

In the classroom, everything is fine. We start the day with a short conversation about February 29th. They don't know how many days there are in a year, much less that February 29th is a special day. But we keep talking. Little by little, they realise how strange the situation is: one more day every four years, so the next year with 'extra day' they already will be in the "big school".

Then we have a long *Read, tell and show*, but without any major news. Sátia saw Andreia, which requires 5 questions. Jessica was going to her aunt's, but she didn't go (Salregos). Aida's father's finger isn't getting better. Andreia's mother is going to make a cake just like the one we made. Luís fell off his bicycle. Iolanda saw Cíntia at the window. She doesn't know what she was wearing because she only saw her head (in response to Adelino). Soraia brought a Barbie. Mafalda is going to make a cake at home. And Adilson got up and got ready by himself because his father was tired. There are a few more unimportant news items.

In the midst of all this, an intern, connected to a school intervention project, comes to talk about recess time. But she starts with a series of moralistic questions about what we have to do, only to propose, in the end, a team of rule enforcers. The children didn't understand a thing, and I think it is a good thing they didn't.

Meanwhile, that conversation delays the work. We update our notebooks, which goes well. Next, we start a writing workshop,

which will only end after recess. The plan is relaxed, except for Indira's work. She has a breakdown and disappears to the schoolyard. We only see her coming back close to lunchtime. She makes up for the lost work time, on her own initiative, during lunchtime recess.
Sátia is committed, Cláudia a little less. Luís works hard, Adelino gets involved a lot with Adilson, Aida with Guida. But, in general, things work out.
In the afternoon, at the library, a frightened Adelino recounts that he lost a doll belonging to his older brother (who probably doesn't know he took it to school). Isaías first says he saw the doll, then that he never did. We remain the same, with Adelino crying.
Then came the design work. With the photography group, we've been working hard to finish the *'camera obscura,*' which we'll later test in a darker part of the library. It works! We see things in reverse. We document it.
The others are also working without major problems, and suddenly we realise that it's already past three o'clock.
Good job!

Wednesday, March 1st

Today we have the correspondents in the room, and the room working for the correspondents.
The *Read, tell and show* is interesting for some, boring for others, and it didn't reach its conclusion because of Sátia's disturbances
We've resume our work on Switzerland. We can talk about legality, illegality, tolerance and intolerance, and nationalities.
They arrive, and we interrupt our work. We exchange gifts, and: *"Oh,*

they have this too!", etc. Off we go to the Quinta de Sales park after a quick reference to the syringes we might find which are not to be touched.
First we visit the *azulejo* factory. There's a lot of interest. Liquid clay, the other clay, the various stages, the moulds, the problem of air bubbles bursting during cooking the tiles, and then the painting.
The cake is approved. The playtime, as always, is short.
In the afternoon, we finish our conversation about Switzerland. Then we unwrap the letters and begin to reply.

Thursday, March 2nd

A very calm day. *Read, tell and show* in which José announces he has a real studio now (a complete room with a desk!), Edmar that he has a spray to dye his hair green (!), Mafalda that she played cards with her mother, Indira that she went out with her mother[17] to visit her uncle who isn't sick but who does not leave the hospital (is he in prison?), Iolanda to say that she's going to a dance the next day. Andreia has two notices nobody understands.
We're having a good time reading texts, with a great abundance of texts... we vote on the texts to be worked on collectively, agreeing that we'll prioritise publishing texts by those who haven't yet had anything published in the newspaper. One strange thing is that the most original texts are the least voted on; is this a problem of competition?
Then, before recess, we observe the square numbers in the

[17] Meanwhile I know that when Indira talks about her mother or grandmother, she talks about the same person: the grandmother she lives with.

multiplication table using the geoboard. Next, we work on the projects.
They tidy up nicely before leaving.
In the afternoon the miracle continues. They come back from recess excited, but then quickly calm down. The plan work begins almost spontaneously, and everybody knows I impose at least two cards per day.
They fulfil their duties without hesitation, and for many, there's still "plenty of time" left over to do other things.
It is ten to three, we tidy up, assess the day, and even manage to leave without major problems.
A typical workday: only one argument between Cláudia and Indira, Aida only cried once, José only slapped three times, and Adelino and Adilson only received 12 warnings, so everything worked perfectly.

Friday, March 3rd

Last day before the Carnival break.
Read, tell and show. Bernardo triumphantly recounts how he had breakfast alone after waking up without his mother knowing. Guida, Sátia, and José went to their cousins' houses, and José announces that he's going on fishing with his father. Isaías has an important announcement: his father is going to buy him a mask. Andreia saw Cláudia, Adilson saw Luís, and Iolanda's mother wouldn't let her take her Carnival costume to school.
Aida realises her birthday falls on the day she's wearing a fantasy, something that had never happened before. Luís went to Pingo Doce supermarket with his mother and saw cakes. So, in April, he will be able to choose one for his birthday.

The morning's group work plan is, intentionally, very demanding. After recess, we have a short plan work session where things get done well. There's very little noise in the room, which I'm quite surprised by.
The council is going well. We decide to endure the noise from Cláudia, Sátia, Luís, and Isaías' group for another week. They point the finger at Isaías, but I'm not entirely sure he is the main reason.. There's an accusation from Guida about José, which makes him exclaim, *"That girl doesn't know what she's talking about."* We're not entirely convinced by José's version of events.
In the proposals, Isaías finally asks for a new responsibility: the colour pens!
Sátia announces that she's switching to brown belt for +/- cards.
We celebrate Aida's birthday. It all goes very well. We sing, hand out cake and juice, and tidy up.
They start applying masks, as they had planned. I help with contouring and eye makeup.
Just when everything seems to be set for the calmest Carnival day I'd ever had, Cláudia came to tell me. Pascal, José “banged" on Guida. I do not understand, and she explains: "He made that gesture to her!" and she shows a copulation mouvement. I tell her to write it on the diary. She goes to the registration board and wants to hit José when passing by. He gets up and takes refuge behind Luís. Cláudia is already on attack, but instead of hitting him, she slaps Luís in the face. I'd never seen Luís so disturbed. In his fury, he overturns some tables, Cláudia leaves the room followed by Luís.
Meanwhile schoolbel rings and almost all leave the room.
Aida wants me to finish wearing her mask. When I say I don't have

much time and that I'm getting ready to leave, she asks: "*But will you be back after Carnival, will you not?*"
Even so, a very quit day...

Monday, March 13th

Organisation until 10:30.
In the afternoon, we worked on the plan. MegaLogo® is popular... especially the games. At the end of the day, we tidied up and even did a collective proofreading of Sátia's text (a concern in the morning because the class newspaper won't be published on the scheduled date).
Good morning at work. At the end of the day, we have a visit to announce the arrival of interns starting on Wednesday.

Tuesday, March 14th

We have a great day at work.
Problems with Indira at lunchtime, a little problem with Cláudia in the afternoon.

Wednesday, March 15th

The new interns have arrived.
Luís has to show himself a little, and I have to call his attention to it several times throughout the day.
The moment is complicated after *Read, tell and show,* things go easier after the plan work.
The afternoon goes very well. Isabel, from the library, tells the story of the three little pigs, and then the plan work also goes well. The pig and photocopier projects are working well, and the books work

with Indira.

Friday, March 17th

There is no *Read, tell and show* session because there is a great deal of commotion not allowing the necessary calm.
Reading the newspaper is the highlight. Everyone is reading and then rereading. I also read texts with Rodrigo, Soraia, Isaías, Adilson, and José, and the activity lasts.
We have to evaluate the plan in the afternoon.
The Council leads us to another crucial discussion about Indira. Her group doesn't want her, Edmar is fed up with her, and no group wants to receive her. Only Luís says he can stand working with her. As a result, Adelino is going to the "window" group (Sátia, Cláudia, Isaías), and Luís will try to stay at Indira's side.
I don't have much faith in it, but oh well.
Discussions regarding the criticisms are more or less peaceful.
The proposals come from José, who wants to present the Batman project and Jessica and Indira, who want to be in charge of the newspaper. I propose to Jessica, who currently has no responsibilities. Then we agree Cláudia and Aida switch responsibilities between them. Finally, the meeting ends. We go to the Quinta de Sales, where they have to show off a little to the interns.

Monday, March 20th

Good *Read, tell and show*, lots of information:
Jessica is looking for little boxes to make a dollhouse for her dolls. Her father was mugged in the neighbourhood, but he didn't have

any money. (Iolanda said he sometimes goes to ask for money at her mother's café, and Cláudia immediately says: well, that's the change).
Guida's mother pulled one of her teeth out. It hurt a little.
José recounts that '*some coloured boys*' stole his mother's gold necklace (Cape Verdean Luís asks: '*Were they black?*') and Guida says that they also stole a ring from her mother. She says that they also stole her uncle's car and gun (which was inside the car) and that they found the car at the police station, with all the windows broken.
Cláudia recounts that her father slipped in the bathtub and that he made dinner, which was quite good, using McDonald's® sauces (ketchup and mustard).
Good collective planning for the week, where, for the first time, the pupils are proposing most of the activities.
The planning work is very relaxed; I work with Rodrigo, Adilson, Indira, Cláudia, Sátia, José, and Isaías.
Adelino and Luís do a good job.
The plan work extend well into the afternoon, with some group activities: building a Santa's house, drawing, and playing some games on the rug. Correspondence *ma non troppo*, despite being a priority.
At the end of the day, José begins the presentation of the Batman project with some kind of joke.

Tuesday, March 21st

Read, tell and show.
Cláudia, who kept the news a secret until she was sure there were

no interns in the class, announced that her cousin had been released from prison and was very happy. Luís's mother baked cookies, Bernardo played '*Serra da Estrela*' [only part of Portugal where currently there is snow in winter time] with Adelino and Luís (they throw mud balls at each other until they get dirty). Aida's mother did a bad job with the curtains for her room, and they hang down a bit. They ate mashed potatoes with meatballs. Mafalda took off her earrings, Soraia, who was absent for a few days, said she saw Pascal at Jumbo, but didn't mention that she told me she's afraid to come to school because of the violence at the schoolyard. Sátia talks about her brother's birthday.

The rest of the Batman presentation goes wonderfully. As Aida says at the end, "*After all, they always worked a little, you know?*"

The plan work goes smoothly. The math work is bearing fruit, and the work with Soraia, Rodrigo, and Adilson is showing small advances.

In the afternoon, the story of the *Mysterious Eggs*[18] captivate them. They hang on every word as Isabel tells the story, and afterwards they were delighted with the idea of making a little song[19] based on the lyrics the 'children' sing to mother hen in the story.

The pig/pork project brings the work together for the final booklet. The same thing happens with the photography project, and the work on the books is almost finished.

Most of those who have other planned activities stay with Catarina,

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[18] "*Os ovos misteriosos*" by Luísa Ducla Soares and Manuela Bacelar, published by Edições Afrontamento.

[19] This song almost became the group's anthem for the next two school years.

doing manual work.
At the end of the day, the tidying up goes very well.

Wednesday, March 22

Read, tell and show: José's cousin is pregnant. Everyone knows pregnancy takes 9 months. Guida was almost hit by a car, Adilson turned off the television in his sleeping room because it was late. With one question, I learn that 10 children (half of the group) have a television in their sleeping room. Luís continues playing *Serra da Estrela.*
After the *Read, tell and show*, we correct and improve a text and complete a language worksheet.
Next, plan work The entrance after recess is, as always, a little hectic, but things are going quite well and unexpectedly stay so during the day.
School forgot to order gas for the canteen, so we only have lunch around 1:30 pm.
Despite this setback, in the afternoon we still discuss the classroom's finances: the children perfectly understand what expenses and income are, and with the “number building” they quickly do the calculations, then for to look for ways to cover expenses until the end of the school year.
We dedicate the rest of the already short afternoon to plan work. The song and music moment will have to wait until tomorrow.

Thursday, March 23

Read, tell and show. Aida saw Andreia near SIC. Sátia came with her father, who had to "go to talk at his brother's school" where the boy

was fired (Luís corrects: *suspended!*). Mafalda dreamed of Andreia standing on the roof of the café. Adelino's father is at home on leave from his work on a highway construction in the North. José's mother fell out of bed and broke “that part, Pascal" showing his shoulder. Adilson swapped shoelaces for rope, Iolanda has a new car (Luís: *It came from Switzerland, I saw it arrive*). Indira saw a dead cat, all smashed. It was the neighbour's cat...
We go out to prepare the vegetable garden, hard work in an even harder soil.
After the break, plan work goes well, except for a violent fight between José and Iolanda. I have to intervene and José sulks, but after about ten minutes everything is back in order. Luís and Adelino work diligently on the illustrations for the book about clocks. I like the autonomy shown by Jéssica and Cíntia in their illustration work.
Iolanda dispatches her work once again without Andreia, who is again frequently absent, as is Soraia.
The "Santa Claus" project has to end, because the group is already in a frenzy. The disorganisation in the painting corner at the end of the day proofs it.

Friday, March 24th

Read, tell and show. Cláudia talks about the shoes her mother bought for her father. Andreia has a tooth coming in. Edmar rode his bicycle with his siblings. Jessica received 500 escudos from her mother for public transport dislocations in Linda-a-Velha. Sátia's father is going to buy a television for her sleeping room because her brother never lets her watch what she wants when they are alone at

home. Soraia recounts how her dog jumped on her. José's 'sister' (a goddaughter of his father) is getting married in Switzerland this summer. Everyone will go to the wedding. Cíntia describes in detail how she saw a dog defecating.
Indira is being contrary. Because there's work to do, she doesn't want to work. She's going to make everyone's life difficult, all day long.
The afternoon brings a big surprise: a Council meeting lasting over an hour! There are two very lengthy and extremely complicated discussions stemming from two criticisms, one directed at José and the other at Indira.
In the first one, José is originally the complainer and suddenly becomes the main defendant in countless minor conflicts. They see only one solution: outside the group. I disagree and explain that we've already tried it and it didn't work. I'm gaining some followers. When I ask if anyone wants to accept José into the group, everyone refuses. I translate for José: you'll have to show a willingness to change to gain the others' trust.
The second situation, with Indira, becomes more painful. When she sees the number of fingers in the air after the question *"Who has complaints about Indira?"* she replies: *"I don't care, I'm changing schools."* The others try to show the ridiculousness of her statement. I ask if she doesn't like anyone in the class. She replies no, but then states that she likes Cláudia (!), Sátia, Cíntia, and Soraia. Only Cláudia, who some time ago rejected Indira from her group, now wants to offer a helping hand. It seems to me that the situation remains tangled and strange. We don't make any progress: Indira stays in her group, and Cláudia makes a *'politically correct'* promise.

I suggest we talk about the painting corner. After much discussion, only Bernardo realizes that the best thing to do is to buy more paintbrushes.
I propose imposing a time limit for *Read, tell and show* until a quarter to ten. There is a counter-proposal: a maximum of 6 children per day, and the staff of the day records their names on a grid, so there is no discussion. There will also be a grid for whoever lunches next to me in the canteen, since, in the eyes of many, this is a privileged situation.
I also propose that the team of the day sit next to me at the Councils, and that one of team members gives the floor.
Finally, a few belt colour changes are accepted, and we go to take air on the schoolyard. There is no time left to sing, nor to look more thoroughly for José's missing wallet.

Monday, March 27th

Read, tell and show and good organisation of the week.
Sandro is back. If the minimum income forces to send us the boy to school, there is perhaps some progress. Sátia played with friends, Cláudia went to Costa beach with some friends, Aida is learning new things on the computer, Soraia has new shoes, Isaías went to Portela to see his new house, Bernardo is still playing *Serra da Estrela*, Andreia had foam everywhere when she took a bath, Jessica was at her aunt's house near Buraca (Cláudia, from Cape Verde: *"Oh! Some very mean black people live there!"*) Soraia hit the road, Indira went to her cousin's birthday party.
We make a draft for weekly planning. Perhaps that's why the plan work has such a serious character today...

Tuesday, March 28th

Read, tell and show by six children. Aida announces that *"poor grandpa"* is old now and can no longer walk. Mafalda saw Adilson, Cláudia bought many things at Jumbo, Andreia got covered in red paint while playing, Edmar went to the neighbour's house, José saw classmates.

In the afternoon, things get complicated during the presentation of two projects. The first, by Andreia and Iolanda with Isabel's support, is going well. There's a lot of interest in the story of the last king of Portugal. I learn from Sandro that he once lived in the house that belonged to Bernardino Machado's family[20], here in Portela, and that this is very bad for people because *"he died there in the house and then came back..."*

The presentation about the radio is going worse. The presenters are lost in their presentation and it's very clear that the work is mainly Edmar's.

Discussions about the projects go wrong. When we finish, influenced by the attitude of some, I demand mandatory work for the rest of the afternoon. At the end of the day, we are all a little sad, some annoyed that we didn't sing in the afternoon, even though we sang in the morning before classes started.

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[20] A mansion that was occupied and later, after resettlement, destroyed by real estate speculation.
Bernardino Machado was one of the liberals proclaiming the first Republic of Portugal and then chosen to be one of the first presidents.

Wednesday, March 29th

In Read, tell and show we spend ten minutes deciding who speaks. Indira PLAYED SCHOOL. Sandro has a cousin who slept over at his house; they played and played cards. Jessica went to the Oeiras courthouse to see her lawyer (she didn't explain why, and we weren't 'in family'[21]). Sátia's brother won pens in a contest at his school. He gave her one. José is going to the Algarve for the weekend with his father. Iolanda is going to her cousin Sofia's christening, which makes Jessica say: *"That girl has many cousins...".*

The presentation on clocks is going very well, and we talk about time, Babylon, sundials, and the origin of the names of the days of the week.

Thursday, March 30th

In the *Read, tell and show* segment, Cláudia recounts that her parents went to see the new car, which has 5 seats and 4 doors. Luís mentions that his mother is taking a course at a company in Carnaxide (Cláudia: *"Was she disgusted?"* Luís: *"????"*. Cláudia: *"Ah! I thought you said 'taking her pulse' "*). He accompanied his mother and completed a jigsaw puzzle he found there while waiting.

Adilson went to play in the street because his father told him to leave the house, and only returned at nine o'clock, when his father was already asleep. Sátia saw Luís at Portela. I asked her what she was doing at Portela and she replied that she went to an aunt's house, but that she wasn't sure if it was her aunt. Soraia saw

[21] There are visitors from other classes and... interns in our classroom.

Adilson. The dog, which normally sleeps in the pantry, was jumping in the hallway. Isaías showed, somewhat embarrassed, that his father had cut his hair. After the *Read, tell and show* moment, the text work, accompanied by the intern Carla, goes well. Isaías, almost being relocated to Portela, comes to confirm with me if I live effectively in Portela. When I confirm, he asks me if it rains inside the houses in Portela.
The seven new projects are ready to launch: Wigs, Money, Lamps, Football, Washing Machines, Easter, Extreme Sports.
I work with Sandro, agreeing that I would be available to him with some exclusivity as long as there are interns in the classroom.
José is difficult to lead with today.

Friday, March 31st

In the segment *Read, tell and show* Mafalda talks about her brother's birthday, Edmar rode his bicycle, and Jessica saw teacher Márcia (one of the school teachers) in Carnaxide. Aida knows that the owner of Sumol died, and someone immediately asks who is now in charge of Sumol. She says he wasn't in charge anymore because he lived in Brazil.
After the *Read, tell and show* segment, the presentation of the project about books doesn't capture much attention.
Next up, plan work. Wow! It was necessary! A relaxed task, in which I continue to support Sandro, who is analysing the second text he dictated to me, with more difficulty than the first. After all, reading is not that easy...
The weekly evaluation goes well, and shows that there was little time this week for the individual work plan. Performance decreased

proportionally...
The Council is going beautifully. Luís is presiding, giving the floor, and the two secretaries are reading from the agenda. There's a lot of attention throughout the entire meeting. I only have to intervene once or twice.
The content has some tricky points: we discuss once again the need to write complaints down in the diary right away to prevent things from getting too serious.
When, in the middle of a discussion about belt colour changes in mathematics, I say, joking, that some people have a strange way of thinking, Sátia immediately replies: *"We're not crazy!"*
There's a complicated discussion with Indira, in which Cláudia and Luís comment on how Indira is always pushing things further. It's decided that Indira will have the plan organised by Pascal, and that she'll stay close to Pascal, even during recess.
It has been decided that anyone who mocks the Council's rules may suffer the teacher's irony.
The painting corner is once again a cause for concern: it's dirty and poorly organised. We've decided to go back to using it as before: only two people at a time, and the paint bottles can't be taken to a working table.
There is a belt change in behaviour for Rodrigo and Aida (red).
The turtle LOGO becomes the object of work and they play games on their free afternoons.

Monday, April 3rd

Read, tell and show is directed by Sátia. Iolanda went to a christening at the *Nossa Senhora da Rocha* fair. Isaías finally moved

house and is now living in Portela. The house is pink, and he slept well. Sátia went to Talaide, where she met Fábio, who left the class after being rehoused. He is already at the other school.
Guida is going to have a new house with 6 rooms in Mirasintra. She has a new bed. Aida is still at the restaurant: she helped her father make fish fillets and her hands smell of fish.
Jessica was forced by her mother to hit her older sister. Dismay: hitting an *OLDER* sister. Really?!
Luís shows a pencil case that his mother bought for him at Jumbo.
Adilson's mother bought him some shoes. Adelino says there was a power outage yesterday and Saturday. We talked about fears in the dark. Sátia recounts that once, in the dark, she thought she had lost her sister because she rolled out of bed onto the floor.
Cláudia went to Lidl and saw Edmar. Bernardo announces that he will *"win"* another Play-Station game at Easter. Indira visited an aunt. Mafalda says that the neighbour went to Serra da Estrela. Andreia ate bunches of grapes and Sátia also announces that her brother's birthday is almost here.
In the morning, I spent the whole morning with Indira.
In the afternoon, I work with Indira, Rodrigo, and Adelino.
A very calm and organised day, except for one activity changing moment.

Tuesday, April 4th

Read, tell and show is led by Cláudia, after I introduced André, a new

student who transferred *in extremis*[22] just before the Easter holidays.

Sátia starts talking about birthdays again, this time her cousin's. Jessica went to Meco and ate fish.

José had an earache, so he didn't come yesterday. Today he brought a real cell phone, which he got from his father after his father bought another one for his mother. I ask him what an eight-year-old does with a real cell phone, and he says, *"I don't know."*[23] I warn him to be careful not to be stolen, but he himself takes charge to bring it to pieces in no time...

Indira went to Jumbo. Luis' mother's car has a broken window and dents because some boys threw stones at the neighbour on the first floor. Isaiah saw Iolanda in a car on the road. The car has Swiss license plates (a few days later I see the "*car-for-neighbour-to-see*": a huge jeep, painted in garish colours). Mafalda's brother said "mom". Cíntia's mother went to Jumbo. Soraia pulled out a tooth herself and already held her baby cousin. Iolanda confirms that she has already

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[22] By law, school changed are very limited and not allowed during the third term. It was the mother's choice to change when still authorised, as she disagreed with the recovery plan presented at the school the boy came from. She came to speak with the Principal to 'demand' the inclusion of the boy in that class with that foreign teacher. It was a good choice, since André will continue two years later, with the others, to the 2nd cycle of primary school, without major problems. Also for him, the pedagogical model was also the right one.

[23] It was in 2000. Industry and marketing have made it so that children now "know": you can play games and send messages. Or take photos secretly. Humanity has advanced... gazillions.

ridden in *"her father's car"*; it turns out to be the car of her cousin who works in Switzerland and is on holiday. Adilson talks about the new clothes his mother gave him. André asks his first question.
A long plan work with a lot of hard work.
We get everything sorted out, and there is still time to discover that The little glass slipper and Cinderella are names for the same story.

Wednesday, April 5th

Read, tell and show directed by Bernardo.
Isaías saw Pascal on the street, and I met his father. Joseph went shopping, and Cláudia says she visited Pascal at home. She liked the working room and a lamp she saw. Andreia, who wasn't at school yesterday, came today a little bruised. She whispered to me that someone hit her, but the '*official*' version is that she just went shopping. Aida peeled potatoes and announces she's going to have surgery. Iolanda got completely soaked in the rain. Jessica saw her aunt, Edmar is going to spend the weekend in Coimbra. Mafalda says Aida fell because of the rain. Adilson has a broken wheel on his bicycle. Indira said once again that she played with a sister and a brother at her aunt's house. When Cláudia asks how many siblings she has, she says she has four, because her mother kept another brother. Luís says his mother brought home a dog. It's a male, small, and his name is Alfa. Adelino climbed onto the roof and injured himself. Sátia's sister fell out of bed.
A fairly calm workday, after the initial hustle and bustle of starting new projects. Projects in the morning, plan work in the afternoon. Lots of project work also in plan work. Surveys on lamps and washing machines, currently being translated into graphs.

Thursday, April 6th

The *Read, tell and show* moment is very well directed by Isaías. Sátia heard about a cousin who died in Cape Verde. Isaías saw Cláudia (now that he's moved to Portela, he has to promote himself...). I ask who still lives in the shacks[24] in Barronhos. From our group, only Rodrigo. Luís comes in with his hair cut and talks about the gifts he received. Guida's mother fell. Jéssica saw Isaías. André went to Jumbo to buy clothes. Soraia went to bed early. Bernardo is going to his sister's wedding. We have a discussion about whether or not it's mandatory to have wedding rings or to get married in a church. Almost everyone rejects the statement that one can get married without being in a church! I take the opportunity to talk about religions other than Catholicism and about those who have no religion. José says his birthday is on the 16th but that he'll bring a cake after the holidays. Soraia stayed home again to take care of her younger sister (this happened 3 times this week). Adilson's sisters are going to be baptised.

After recess, a wonderful moment of plan work, which will last all day.

In the early afternoon we have some minor problems in the painting corner— we run out of paint, and Cláudia gets dirty.

I have time to reread many texts with the respective authors, helping them to paste them into their notebooks. Bernardo is surprised at himself because he reads very well.

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[24] Between 1998 and 2001 the City of Oeiras implemented a program of social housing to end with the slums where most of the children of my classroom stil lived in, when I started working with them.

We get everything ready and that is it.
Two Dutch interns (Comenius) found the group extremely interesting because they were able to observe how the children worked and organised themselves. They were amazed by it all. There was also a lot of enthusiasm for the Raiz Editora – MEM exercise cards for spelling and grammar.

Friday, April 7th

Read, tell and show is run by Mafalda and Adelino.
Mafalda says her brother has 6 teeth. I ask how many teeth we have in total and Cíntia says 19. We'll have to confirm. Aida says again that she's going to have surgery. We're left speechless by the expression *'I belong to the hospital'* [what in Portugal has to do with the assignment to a public hospital in function of the place one lives when needing hospital admission]...
Andreia talks about a new television play, José says he's going to the zoo and that Edmar, Adelino and he are moving to a house with an extra room. Sátia says she's going to eat pizza (Question: *"Whose?"* Answer: *"My brother's!"* – A shortcut... when there's a birthday party, there's pizza).
After recess, it's a race against time: Jessica is very involved with the newspaper, many people are using the geoboard that seems to be 'rediscovered' today, and quite a few are still working on the self-correcting exercise cards, both for language and mathematics.
Straightforward plan work, with varied support.
We adjust the lesson plans and conduct a very thorough evaluation with valuable feedback regarding the plan work, free writing exercises, and the exploration of problem-solving situations

(mathematics). The change in belt colour for language and mathematics is becoming increasingly frequent.

The afternoon meeting with the Council begins well. The president, Mafalda, is a little distracted, but Adelino and Adilson are working well. Many complaints are dealt with quickly. We agreed that from now on, in the “I don’t like" section in the diary the reason for mentioning someone will also be written[25].

There’s a big discussion about Indira, who behaved in a way she considers exemplary despite a very serious dispute with Iolanda on the computer. Iolanda suggests that Indira stay away from the computer for a day, and Mafalda immediately asks to vote. I vote against it, because I'm not sure if the problem originated with Indira, and this way I could register my doubt.

Shortly after, Cláudia suggests Indira not to leave her seat for a day, and once again, Mafalda immediately puts it to a vote. I vote against it for the second time. I ask for the floor to explain: Indira's ‘failure’ is rather a ‘failure’ on my part, Cláudia's, and Luís's (the teacher, Indira's supervisor, the person in charge of the computer). I consider it strange that this is Cláudia's suggestion. Furthermore, I consider it unfair, at a time when Indira has put in a lot of effort. I don't agree with two proposals voted on in the same way that concern the same subject. I tell Indira that I will be available to her, as her teacher, that day for whatever activity she wants to do.

Further on, there's an interesting discussion about Cláudia. Only

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[25] Until now, many children have simply written the name of the person they want to talk about, followed by their own name, relying on a memory that is not always accurate at the Council moment, normally on Friday.

three have the courage to admit they're afraid of Cláudia because she imposes things. We discuss the difference between proposing work among two people and each one agreeing on inscribing it in one's work plan, versus demanding another person to do what is asked one to do, without having being part of the planning.
I want to emphasise again how good it was to see so much and diverse work done during plan work.
There is a note from Guida in the "we like" section, about Sátia's work. She highlights her support work on Monday, the day she was member of the day team.
Then there are proposals for a change of belt colour.
Cíntia wants to switch places because Jessica is always asking her to do her work. Iolanda switches places with Cíntia.
We end with another discussion about Cláudia's place as she constantly changes. She cites poor visibility. We agree to look for solutions, especially since she doesn't convince anyone with this argument.
A fight between José and Luís forces me to announce that the free afternoon will be spent inside the classroom, because I don't feel capable of controlling any other potential fights outside. At first there's some resistance, but they eventually agree.

The third term: calmer waters

We had integrated the first two days of the third term – a Thursday and Friday – into the work plan for the last half-week before the Easter break. I was amazed by Cláudia: she remembered that we had agreed to do a text assignment for today; several people remembered that we were going to explore a math problematic

situation.
Making long-term planning with the group is becoming possible!
In the *Read, tell and show* segment from the last few days of the previous period, we learned that Cláudia's father didn't leave the house, Jessica's younger sister fell out of the bathtub, Sátia's uncles came to her house (which makes Cláudia ask if Sátia made cakes for them, and she replied: *"Me! No!"*), Soraia's baby cousin was hospitalised, and Andreia's mother gave her a camera, but she doesn't want to put the batteries in so they wouldn't run out.
Mafalda announced that she is turning eight. The cake will be a "Tweety". Luís talked about his grandfather's birthday; José pierce an ear and it didn't hurt. His father is going to buy a jeep to go to Switzerland. Sandro said Uncle Ramalho went to his mother's house. Adilson showed off his father's haircut; Isaías saw Cláudia on the street; Cíntia saw Cláudia too.
The next day, Sátia announced her brother's camping trip, Isaías saw Jessica, Bernardo was too lazy to get up, Mafalda went to Jumbo with her mother, Indira announced she was going to her aunt's house in Carnaxide, Adelino has a new television. His father bought a video camera, Iolanda is going on holiday with her grandmother in Coimbra, and Luís is going to Almada.
The project work on Tuesday afternoon went perfectly. We built a circuit of lamps, made plaster coins, and constructed a washing machine out of cardboard. The football project didn't progress much, but the other projects are going well.
In the classroom, we discussed a story about the neighbourhood

that had appeared in almost all newspapers and televisions[26]: several former residents of Barronhos know Mano and some other members of his group very well. Adelino asked to cover the photo because it was keeping him awake at night [it was about an assault whereby the police captured the youngster after various gun shots — in a normally very pacific country, at least in 2000].

Thursday, April 27th, 2000

Nothing special about *Read, tell and show.*
Great project work moment: the various groups worked enthusiastically on their projects. The "extreme sports" group, with the support of the interns, built a series of games with magnets. The "football" group has a lot of literature and a series of diagrams of field strategies.
The "washing machines" invested heavily in the work, supported by Sátia, who also continued her individual project. She manufactured a very interesting wig. The money project progressed immensely with the banker's response (the group will send a letter to thank the banker who helped). The lamp project is less developed. After the very successful initial work, they slowed down a bit and are less inclined to research the history of lamps. We'll see.
In the afternoon, work didn't go so well. They had some difficulty getting back on track, and the work didn't yield much for some.
The tidying up went well, and they themselves considered the afternoon a bit disorganised. We've lost the habit...

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[26] Se further, *the population*

Friday, April 28th

Before day start, I gather this week's texts, written on the computer. There are 9, two of which are written by Luís.

In the *Read, tell and show* segment, we learn that Sátia saw Guida's mother in Carnaxide, that Cláudia went to Jumbo, that Luís' grandfather's bird got loose and went to his aunt's room, that Mafalda went home with her friend Diogo. Jessica went to wait for her uncle who came from Spain, Edmar saw his cousin, Adilson put cream on his face without washing it, José recounts that Edmar got angry with his sister because of a pair of pants. Iolanda had to go looking for her mother to be able to enter the house, Soraia creates confusion with the verb *'take'* when she says: *"Yesterday at the association my father took a box of chocolates for me."* Cláudia starts a whole conversation about taking being the same as stealing. In the end, we clarify the difference between taking, stealing and buying.

Andreia has new pants.

In the afternoon, at the Council, the discussions are lukewarm. André is very attentive, even if he doesn't understand much yet.

The "I don't like" only leads to two more heated discussions: Soraia complains about Cláudia's punches, leading to the conclusion that it would be better for Cláudia to have someone else by her side. Soraia switches places with Guida.

The other discussion is about José's aggressiveness towards some colleagues, ending up he will work alone one day. I insist on talking about his attitude towards Indira, whose work receives a positive evaluation.

Bernardo switches responsibilities with Luís, Mafalda will be in

charge of the newspaper along with Jessica, and José will be responsible for the little messages.
Luís switches places with Bernardo, Adilson with André, and Edmar reconsiders and takes his place. In general, the boys run away from Indira.
The new schedule is accepted without much discussion:

	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
9.00 10.30	Tell, read, and show Organization	Tell, read and show Text work	Tell, read and show Problem	Tell, read and show Text work	Tell, read and show Problem
11.00 12.15	Language plan work	Mathematics plan work	Language plan work	Mathematics plan work	plan and evaluation
13.15 15.00	work presentation, or individual work plan, including project work.				Council Free Afternoon

Work presentation includes: reading texts, reading from the newspaper and presenting projects.
Project work includes: group correspondence, class or group projects, various activities, work in the vegetable garden,...

Tuesday, May 2nd

It was a pleasant day that began with a series of news items on *Read, tell and show* in which Aida, who had returned, was featured talking about her operation and subsequent recovery. She, too, was in good spirits.
Andreia performed her duties as the person in charge during the day brilliantly. Taking advantage of what Mafalda brings in, I announce that Assunção has given us a video cassette with half an hour of recording.

Up until recess, the plans are organised, including an unexpected event: a writing workshop within the Language workshop.
The language workshop causes some surprise, because not everyone understood what it's intended for: an hour and fifteen minutes of work on any assignment related to Portuguese language. Some complain, but on the other hand, I soon see many more reading and illustrating their texts in their notebooks. It was the necessary boost to break overly ingrained routines. Everyone is surprised when we arrive at lunchtime.
After lunch, we selected texts* to work on and publish.
After selection we decided to send the three most voted texts to the newspaper, three to work, and two to the notice board on the office door. For the rest of the afternoon, we have planning work. We didn't notice Indira today; she worked calmly, only being prompted two or three times, always by José.

Wednesday, May 3rd

An intern is in charge of today's leading. In the *Read, tell and show* segment, Soraia made her mark. Bold, with a voice much louder than usual, she told a story about billiards and pool cues.
Good work from most of the children, interrupted by two fights between Jessica and Louis. Since no one intervenes, the situation gets complicated after recess. At one point Jessica leaves through the door and Luís sulks. After some time, I go to get Jessica, who sits there crying for a while. The math workshop ends in chaos.
In the afternoon things get worse: the project work, with the same intern in the most complicated group, generates a great deal of instability and the work becomes impossible. The last straw that

breaks the camel's back is a fight between Adelino and Luís.
I get angry, ask them to tidy everything up, and we assess the situation. As always, something trivial is at the root of it: one person called names to another. Gestures and insults follow, signals that are still unclear to the intern, and that's it.
I try to show that interruptions annoy others.
We make a complete inventory of what still needs to be done. Most people know exactly what they still need to do. We agree in renewed silence that the work will be done tomorrow after *Read, tell and show.*
I'll use the rest of the afternoon for a group math project.
We leave at the last minute, after a day marked by my anger, arguments, and, on the way out, lots of kisses from the more sensitive ones.
It's not just the children who get upset during these crises.
The good thing is that dialogue was never cut off...

Thursday, May 4th

Another intern, and the day is more relaxed. In *Read, tell and show* we learn that Andreia went to Toys R Us, that Mafalda's turtles have white spots and don't eat, that José bathed the dog and that his father bought him two games for the Playstation, that Jéssica saw André when she went to buy bread, that Cláudia's father will take care of dinner so that her mother can attend the parents' meeting this afternoon, that Adilson fell out of bed when he got up, that Aida will make a model of the washing machine (yet another one...), that Guida can't go to the meeting because otherwise she'll get home too late (Mirasintra), that Luís's mother is coming to the meeting,

and that Indira pricked herself with a needle while making clothes for the dolls.
The project work is impeccable. They work very calmly, and the projects are all almost ready.
The mothers and fathers meeting is going very well. All families are represented, except for those of Isaías, Adelino, Guida (who advised) and Adilson.
The children are the hosts, the adults watch and ask questions. It's interesting to see how the children draw their families into their activities, and how interested the parents are in the work about the municipality and the Portela Road, Switzerland, and their projects in little groups. There's a lot of interest in the clocks, the washing machine, the magnets from the "extreme sports" game project, and also in the video made by Assunção.
Finally, when the children are already playing at recess, I have a long conversation with José's mother about his aggressive behaviour. Indira's grandmother had already spoken to me about her before. I realize now that both don't get along very well, even outside of school.
Before the meeting, the stepmother of one of the children also appeared, crying because of the school attendance for Social Security: *"They're going to take the girl away, it's the assistant who's making accusations."* A very incoherent speech and at the end a story that smells like a cheap soap opera about how she brought the girl, her sister's daughter, immediately after birth, and arrived in Lisbon with the baby just 6 hours old.

Friday, May 5th

The day promised to be calm, and it was.
In the *Read, tell and show* moment, Cláudia evaluates the parents' meeting: it went well, Sátia's father is nice, and her father didn't want to give her an egg with the dinner.
Sátia played with Cláudia during the part of the meeting reserved for adults, José talks about settling scores with punches and kicks, Mafalda discovered that her turtles like plants, Andreia's mother bought many toy dogs, and Indira has a new pair of pants. Luís gained a 3-year-old cousin at home with whom he played (along with his father).
The conversation turns to the father of one of the children, and Iolanda says he is blind and always wears glasses. I confirm and say that she and I also always wear glasses, but our disability is less severe.
Soraia explains that an ice cream gave her a stomach ache. We decided to write a letter to *Olá*® because of a class discussion about the flavours of the candies that come in *Epá* ice cream. Aida announces that her father is going to pick up the new car and that at the moment she has a rental car because of a broken clutch. Guida says she slept on the bus home. Iolanda announces she's going to take a shower, and Adilson fell out of bed again.
The council meeting runs better than last week's. Jessica presides, Sátia is the secretary, and she shines. She also takes notes on the decisions. Many complaints are forgiven, probably because they've been forgotten. The many complaints about Indira are also systematically forgiven. I intervene and say that I don't agree that

Indira should be treated like reckless drivers: they make dangerous manoeuvres, but instead of paying the fine, they are pardoned. A discussion ensues with harsh interventions from Cláudia, Jessica, and Mafalda regarding Indira, in addition to an attempt at gossip from José (quickly and rightly cut off by Jessica). At the end of the discussion, Indira is given supervision, and a group of volunteers is responsible for ensuring she is always accompanied. Furthermore, Cláudia herself is designated as the person responsible for going to the bathroom with her. A dispute between Luís and Adelino (yet another one...) regarding priority for using a book from the classroom library leads to a new rule: "reading a book takes precedence over copying a book" (which continues to be a "game" for some).

It is also decided that Luís and José will switch places because of the problems with Jéssica. Adelino congratulates Cláudia for the help she gave him. I reiterate she was also impeccable in supporting Indira during difficult times, with my partnership. Isaías continues trying to pass without knowing the test he has to take, José is in *status quo,* Andreia switches places with Soraia because of the disputes with Mafalda. Mafalda takes Iolanda's place.

After the meeting, for which Sátia and Jessica receive congratulations as chair, we have a quiet, free afternoon with support from Prokofiev, where drawings for Mother's Day are the priority.

Monday, May 8th

Finally, a normal week, 5 days: 4 more first-grade children in the classroom because of a teacher's grandfather who died. Tomorrow

there will be also visitors, with the announced strike by public and transport sector.

There's news in the classroom: Cláudia knows that a 4th-grade pupil will act in the soap opera "SOS Children", which is about to premiere. Mafalda continues the turtle saga, now with questions about changing the water. Iolanda's brother hit her on the head with an iron spoon. She was left with a bleeding wound. Andreia's mother cut her hair. Andreia has new sneakers that are causing her pain. Adelino went to the key handover party for the new social housing in Portela, caught a cold bad and became ill (he complained all morning of headaches, and at lunchtime they had to call home to come and get him). Luís asks how many people he knows (out of the 205 who will live there). He doesn't know. Aida is about to make her first communion, her father's new car has a small problem with the accelerator, which makes Iolanda say that her father's Swiss car also drives slowly. Luís, who lives near Iolanda, makes me realize that besides the Jeep that belonged to their cousin who has already left, there's also an old Toyota Van, which I thought was stolen scrap metal that had been abandoned on the street. Aida continues, saying that she also has stomach pains, probably as a result of the operation. Jessica cut her finger on a can of tuna. Soraia has new sneakers and pants. José says his father gave his mother 25 contos (25000 escudos) to buy her suit and dress for the wedding. He saw Aida at Continente. His father bought 4 chickens at the market early in the morning, which he later slaughtered to make chicken and rice stew. Guida went to visit her grandmother.

After this extensive *Read, tell and show* moment, we plan the week,

then the day, and finally the individual work plan, and we get to work.

Tuesday, May 9th

Today, despite the expected visitors (due to the transport strike), my pupils got a lecture first thing in the morning, before *Read, tell and show* because of the poor performance of several responsible agents and various issues that are not being handled properly. There are problems with correspondence, and also problems with the organisation of materials and games.
In the *Read, tell and show* segment, Iolanda talks again about her brother who hits her. Cláudia's aunt bought a vacuum cleaner, which leads to excellent descriptions of how to pick up dust.
Sátia talks about a cousin with the same name and says that her birthday is almost here... July 4th Adelino, who had such a high fever yesterday, was still playing in the street with his cousin, and today he seemed to be doing well. Guida's brother fell out of his crib. Aida bought beige shoes for her first communion. She wears a size 38! Luís went for a ride on a quad bike with a friend. Another friend fell off the bike. José announces again that his father is going to trade in the car for a jeep. He spent 4 contos (4000 escudos) on scratch-off tickets.
Jessica mentions that her father's birthday is on July 1st. Isaías, as always, asks what her father's name is. Mafalda's brother is almost walking, at just over a year old. She bought a plastic cell phone with gums for 100 escudos.
Soraia says her mother bought her a pen. Cíntia saw Edmar at Outurela. Indira went to a friend's house but doesn't remember his

name, what he did, or where he lives... Adilson keeps falling out of bed (he has many ways of asking for attention). Cláudia also mentions that her father will be working away for 15 days.
After lunch, we have a reading session; André and Iolanda's texts are chosen for the class newspaper, and Cláudia and Bernardo's for the notice board. I really liked a text by Jessica about a sick black cat that nobody liked except its own mother, who is black, but the black children in the class didn't find the text funny.
We return to plan work, with some quiet moments alternating with more hectic ones, mainly because of Isaías and Adelino, Indira and Guida, and Jessica and José. We manage to prepare the presentation of 4 projects. The project about Lighting Fixtures and the Money will be done tomorrow.
At the end of the day, we have a very positive assessment.

Wednesday, May 10th

A full *Read, tell and show*: Sátia talks about the power outage. Dad didn't have candles at home, it was difficult to find the beds. Cláudia says that her father went to complain to the neighbours, who make a lot of noise. Immediately, José asks about the colour of the neighbours, black or white? They are mixed-race, Cláudia replies.
Guida talks about her brother who fell again. Apparently, another brother is learning to walk.
André saw Isaías at the kiosk, where he went to buy sweets.
They talk about the kiosk owner. Now, when talking about a person, people don't just ask for their name, but also their age. It's a new trend...
José says his father already went to see the jeep he wants to trade

his car for. His mother went to pick up her wedding dress.
Jessica talks about two uncles who came from Spain. Indira also mentions the power outage, and that someone took advantage of the situation to break windows, which greatly upset her grandmother. Andreia shows the pencil case her mother bought for her at the 300-escudos-store (until shortly after introducing the Euro, the name for cheap megastores).
Aida informs that her father can pick up his car. Mafalda announces that she is going to be an aunt, and her older brother is going to have a baby. Soraia went to Mass to prepare for communion.
Luis saw his uncle arrive in a black car.
Next, we have a math problem involving measurement: we are making a floor plan of the room for our correspondents and for ourselves.
In the language workshop that follows, many read, several work in the archive, including on spelling; some texts are written and the computer is used extensively. Indira hands out two vocabulary sheets.
In the afternoon, the washing machine project group presents their very well-done and well-understood work. This leads to some interventions by Luís and Sátia about electricity and electrical wiring. They also discuss the before and after of machines without electricity and how difficult it was to wash by hand. The presentation of the washing machine model is a great success.
Afterwards we set up a list of activities and shops that we know of in both the Outurela and Portela neighbourhoods.
We evaluated the work of those in charge, the work of the day, and the plan.

Thursday, May 11th

In the Read, tell and show segment, we learn that Cláudia's father is traveling tomorrow for work on a road in the North, and that his boss is also her uncle. Mafalda saw André and Luís when she went to buy bread. Luís says his dog bit him because it got scared when he came home. It wasn't serious. It's André's birthday. Soraia complains about a sewage smell in her house. Guida announces she's going to the doctor. José went to see his great-grandmother, who is ill, and saw the police "beating up a 'negro'." Cláudia corrects him: *"You could say 'a person of color'."* Then the riot police arrived and took the man away.
Andreia saw Edmar playing football, I talked about the idea of the end-of-year party, Indira said she's going out with her grandmother, and Aida helped her father at the restaurant. Nothing shocking... Today, as yesterday, Indira is working and not causing any problems.

Friday, May 12th

In today's *Read, tell and show* segment, Cláudia talks about three packets of potato chips and how she slapped her father because he wouldn't give her an egg. Sátia saw her father on his bicycle when he was going home. He left the car at home and went to work by bicycle. Isaías, not understanding, asks if Sátia went home by bicycle. She laughs heartily. Luís went to the café with his uncle and father and received a croissant. Iolanda doesn't understand, so he

simplifies: a cake with cream, which isn't exactly the same thing[27].
José is overjoyed because he's already training at Benfica. Indira was playing with her father, who is also her grandfather. When I ask what they were playing, she replies that she was combing her hair. "Great game," Louis says through gritted teeth.
Iolanda explains that the front door broke. The key broke in the lock, making it impossible to open. "So, how did you get into the house?" Cíntia asks. "Through the window, of course!" is the reply.
Mafalda slipped while playing with her brother and ended up on the floor.
Soraia saw Luís from her room — he was with the dog. At the Association[28] she saw Edmar, who came to ask for chocolate. Jessica also saw Luís and Adilson has the safest bed.
The Council is a revelation. Bernardo is the secretary, Soraia is the president, and she does it very well. The meeting lasts an hour and 20 minutes. There are two very good discussions about our lack of patience with each other. This stems from an intervention by Aida about Luís and José, and another by Adelino about Isaías. They are stories of hitting and kicking, which usually involve difficulties moving around the room and occasional problems with erasers, as well as minor friction. A dispute with Guida, Aida, and Andreia leads us to reactivate the rule that only two people can be in the library at

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[27] Since they don't associate the French word "*croissant*" (crescent moon) with the shape of the bread, many people alter the word to the Portuguese "coração" (heart), a word they know even though it has no meaning here.

[28] *Association* here refers to the café-bar of the 18 de Maio residents' association.

the same time, even though one can fetch a book to read it elsewhere. It's also pointed out that chess and checkers can only be played at a table. When Cláudia announces that she no longer wants to support Indira, I ask who thinks they can: Andréia volunteers. Luís' observation that while we were working, Guida was playing around and didn't know what we were talking about, hit hard. Guida broods over the criticism for quite a while.
There are many proposals and changes of chairs. It is noted that anyone who does not take care of their responsibilities will not have free access to the activities in the room that require a responsible person, and that someone will be held accountable for them. The same applies to those who do not respect the entry bell. It becomes a rule that anyone who cheats at checkers will no longer be allowed to play until the Council decides on the matter.
After the meeting, there's a 5-minute break to go to the bathroom, and then the wig project is presented, which goes wonderfully. Sátia explains and shows how she made the wigs. We talk about clowns and grubby hairless kings who lived in palaces without bathrooms, and we leave the class at the last minute.
Who would have thought...

Monday, May 15th

In the segment *Read, tell and show* Cláudia recounts going to the pool and her mother telling her to try selling Tupperware®. She came back with the catalog under her arm. José went to the fair and announced that his mother is pregnant. He seems to like the idea.
Guida talks about her 2-year-old brother who scratched her face.
Aida had her first communion and cut her hair. She wore a dress,

gloves, and carried flowers. She received books.
Jessica saw a girl being run over in front of her house. She went to see the fireworks in Outurela. Adelino took his things to the new house and still needs to take the beds apart.
Mafalda announces what everyone already knew: *Sporting* won the championship. She was happy and stamped her foot on the ground. She says that her turtles still aren't moving much.
Soraia didn't like seeing Sporting to win (I wonder how adults don't realize the damage they cause to children by instilling certain parochial and club-biased behaviours in them). Andreia went to her cousins' christening and got new clothes again. (Is that true?)
Sátia had a sore throat (also during the day, which made her cry, a rare occurrence). Iolanda has a tooth coming in, Indira has a little dog, Estrela, who is black, beautiful, with a small bottom, and whom her aunt brought. On Saturday, pus came out of his ear.
Adilson went to his grandmother's house. I ask him if there were also beds one could fall off of, and he said yes. Bernardo went to a wedding and saw the bride and groom kissing on the mouth. Luís will go to a christening where his father was the godfather.
Next, we organize the week: Indira fills out the weekly schedule, Soraia takes care of the daily schedule. Projects, presentations, and the study about the neighbourhood. Other activities include reading texts and talking about the end-of-year party. We fill out work plans and begin with the Language Workshop.
Afternoon task: The two classes (we and our neighbour 2nd year class) will coordinate the formation of six groups to create a list of questions for the interviews with local shopkeepers. The explanation, group formation, and question preparation will take

approximately the entire afternoon.

Tuesday, May 16th

The *Read, tell and show* segment is proceeding with the calm we've become accustomed to lately. Cláudia went with her father — who ultimately didn't go abroad — to Jumbo. Indira recounts: the dog bit her when she tried to catch it. Sátia says that when she got home, everyone was worried because her brother hadn't shown up yet. He was playing soccer somewhere. Soraia is participating in marches (Portuguese popular marches in June) and went to get her measurements taken for her clothes. Iolanda saw Soraia's mother at the café. Guida received a gift when she went home, Luís has new clothes for the christening he already mentioned, André's brother has a birthday, Aida helped peel garlic, it's complicated... Jessica went with her mother to Jumbo to buy a large bag of crisps, Mafalda has a short-sleeved shirt with Pokémon figures, Andreia went with her mother to the farm and the others ask if her mother is her mother or her godmother. She replies that it's the same person. José is wearing new clothes and Jéssica asks, "Who gave them to you?"

After Read, tell and show we do a text-based activity.

Then the math workshop was quite disrupted because I had to speak with the head of the works department at the Oeiras City Council[29]. Indira is starting to show signs of instability after a few calm days. The morning's summary shows who worked and who

[29] It's difficult to explain that non-teaching hours are before 9 am and after 3:15 pm...

didn't: Adelino, José, Indira, Guida, Jéssica, and Sátia.
In the afternoon, Indira decides to bring a dog into the school, the mother of her puppy. It causes a huge mess in all the classrooms. We loose some time before everyone goes into their respective classrooms.
The presentation of the Desk and Night Lamps is going very well. There are many questions about the construction of the electrical circuit. Everyone understands what a circuit is and what happens when two wires that shouldn't touch do touch: a short circuit. We also compared the word "interruptor" (switch or interrupter) with "interromper" (interrupt). Bernardo knows that *interrupt* would be with a blue line, and *interrupter* with a green line[30].
Follows a series of experiments with materials that conduct electricity and those that do not. At the end, the group receives a standing ovation.
The money group presented the project with great dedication. Iolanda is very knowledgeable about the subject. They discuss almost all the aspects mentioned by the banker, only forgetting that the money is printed in England.
Then there's still half an hour of the plan that doesn't quite work out, due to the time it takes to heat up and store. At the end of the day, Indira, who had been praised by everyone before, for her work on the project, becomes very aggressive towards José and Cláudia again.

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[30] To facilitate grammatical systematisation, in the texts we analyse and correct together, we highlight the verbs in blue and the nouns in green.

Wednesday, May 17th

Read, tell and show without any hiccups: Sátia's front door locked with the key inside, and her father had to remove the door so they could get in. It's fixed now. Cláudia, who despite having nothing to tell, doesn't want to stay quiet, talks about Jumbo. She's not very successful.
Mafalda talks about Aida having tests done, Guida shows the sneakers her mother gave her, and Aida says she suddenly got sick yesterday.
Luís announces that he won the snake game (MegaLogo®) 16 times. José went to Carrefour and strolled around there. Then he went to Colombo. Adilson almost fell out of bed. André announces that he's going to eat at Pizza Hut. Indira announces her birthday and that the dog bit her again. Andréia shows off a doll she made.
The problem today is very complex: transferring the layout of all the objects in the room onto a sheet of graph paper ten times smaller.
In the afternoon, we make a choice between 10 texts.
Then, we have a very quiet rest of the afternoon, with plan work.

Thursday, May 18th

Read, tell and show was disrupted today, not everyone spoke. There was a lot of noise and huge excitement, which makes me suggest ending earlier. We noted that José went to the fair and was scared in the haunted house, that Jéssica's sister cried because she lost money, and that Iolanda took a bath at one in the morning.
Then we organise ourselves to go out into the neighbourhood and conduct the interviews: each group is accompanied by an adult.

Aida's mother takes one of them to the restaurant and an hour later is back at the Portela square.
Cláudia, the fellow teacher, goes with a small group to Outurela to look for the stationery shop. I accompany the larger group with the interns. The children behave beautifully during the trip to the neighbourhood. The groups disperse to the different stores, and we enter the drugstore.
We're back at school, right at recess time.
After break, the math workshop is going wonderfully. Indira finishes the +/- test quickly. She's mastered the Cuisenaire rods better than I thought. She is very dedicated to her work all day, with Cláudia being a valuable support in the afternoon. She herself works hard in the morning. Luís continues to be very proactive.
In the afternoon, the text work is quick and constructive.
The rest of the afternoon is spent working on the plan. Everything goes very well until a group notices that one of the interns is making a drawing for Luís to colour in. Everyone wants to do the same thing. The last twenty minutes become very hectic.
But the day ends calmer than it began. Long live the third period!

Friday, May 19th

A long *Read, tell and show* to make up for yesterday? Cláudia's brother got a violent beating from his father because he *"hasn't opened the book since they moved to the new house,"* and then another from his mother because he drank all the juice. Sátia's sister has a new dossier, André is going on vacation with a 12-year-old cousin named José, Luís saw Sátia's brother at the after-school program, Aida woke up early and her mother told her to go back to

sleep, Mafalda is going for a walk with catechism and cleaned the turtle aquarium, Adelino went to play tag in *Quinta de Sales*, José let Luís ride his bicycle when he came back from the after-school activities. Indira is going to her godfather's house, Bernardo saw Edmar, Jessica saw someone with their butt sticking up, went to give them a beating, it was on of her sisters. Isaías saw Cláudia, he doesn't know where.

After *Read, tell and show* we return to the problem of the room plan that concerns us.

Next, a good work plan moment.

An intern organizes the plan evaluation, in which Jessica claims to have done a bad job, which isn't true. Sátia says the same thing and gets very upset when Jessica says it's not true. I don't understand.

Iolanda disagrees with Isaías, who says he did a good job, because according to her, he copied results from answer sheets.

In the afternoon, the Council meeting begins at 1:20 PM and lasts until 2:15 PM. It's very organised with little disruption. Cláudia and Aida share the roles of chairman and secretary. It runs smoothly.

Bernardo is complaining that Adelino made fun of him. I remind him of the law that says *we don't make fun of each other.*

The various complaints about Indira, even after I state that she is working better and that investing in the support team was a good decision, lead to one conclusion: she still doesn't know how to move around the room. I think we have to give her another chance: Indira will spend another week moving around the room without being accompanied by a supervisor. At the next meeting, we will evaluate and decide if we need to revert to the previous approach.

Some complaints, whose origin no one remembers, reinforce the

rule that an explanation about the complaint must be written in the diary: it is approved that complaints with only a name will no longer be read in the Council. Jessica, Isaiah, and Rodrigo vote against it. It must not just a coincidence...
After many observations in the "we like" section and reading the "we propose" section, we're going for a walk at *Quinta de Sales*. I discover that Isaías can walk on his hands for a long time and that Adelino is a real tree climber.
There are lots of kisses and hugs at the end of the day.

Monday, May 22

It's good to be in the third term, even without printer ink and lacking the money to properly equip the class. But today Luís and Soraia aren't showing up, and neither is Sandro.
The *Read, tell and show* moment goes very well, and the second-year teacher trainees — they couldn't believe what they saw after being with us at the beginning of the school year — return today for a two-week period.
Mafalda went on a trip to Sintra with her catechism class and enjoyed it. Her friend Catarina, who went with her, cried when she suddenly couldn't see her mother. I announce the arrival of the mail. Cláudia talks about her cousin who ended up at the police station after a dispute with the bus driver, who called him a *"black son of a bitch"* because he didn't show his pass. They both ended up in the hospital; her cousin has a broken arm and is awaiting questioning. She also mentions that her mother "distribuiu" [distribute] (Do you mean "atribuiu" [assigned] Yes! assigned her...) the task of ironing clothes.

Indira happily announces that it's her birthday, and we agree that we'll sing "Happy Birthday." She straightened her hair. Bernardo saw Edmar. His father cut her hair (Rodrigo also has very different look, with his head washed and treated). José went to the *Rocha market*, but there wasn't much, he said. And he doesn't like churros. He got his ear this time properly pierced, along with his father. André announces that his mother is moving out and that he'll stay with her, while his brother stays with his father. He does not know why they're separating. Adelino took pistols, which aren't real, to the new house.

Jessica also went on the Sunday school trip and won some shoes. She's so happy because it's the first time she has real shoes of her own. Until now she's always worn her older sister's used sandals or flip-flops. Cíntia's brother is turning 15. Adilson went to Carnaxide, he doesn't know why. His mother turned 28. Andréia went rollerblading. Aida shows off her new shirt and a colourful pen she received as a gift. Guida celebrated her cousin's 11th birthday. The cake was Tweety Bird themed. She gave perfumes and toys as gifts.

Sátia went to the park near her house with her father and went racing with her brother. She says she "gained" a pen that he had lost in her room.

Then, Bernardo makes the weekly plan, Andreia the daily plan. Soraia isn't there, Mafalda helps. The children make their individual work plans and we have time to distribute and read the mail. The group letter includes photographs of the correspondents' visit to Quinta de Sales. Everyone has mail except Cíntia, who is annoyed.

When we take stock of the morning, we find that the work was calm and many things were accomplished.

During lunch, which I don't attend, José disrupts everything at our classroom canteen table. In the early afternoon I tell him that he's overstepping the bounds of the Council and that he can no longer enter the canteen without me, so I can seat him at a table by himself. He grumbles, but accepts.
The afternoon begins with a review of letters written and replies received, which we use to prepare a new letter to the Oeiras City Council, asking why we haven't sent a response[31].
After this intellectual effort, the plan work focuses on drawings and "gifts" for the correspondents.
José and Adilson are going to finish their work in the library, Cláudia is coordinating a multiplication table game (now with calculations and not the pictures) with 4 other girls, Bernardo and Jéssica are playing checkers, also with me. Adelino is making language worksheets, Aida is spending the afternoon on the computer inventing a story.

Tuesday, May 23

The *Read, tell and show* session is shorter than yesterday's: Luís went to the announced christening, but arrived late at home, and therefore didn't come to school yesterday. Cláudia is sad because, finally, her father has gone to work in the North and won't be back for another 15 days. André announces he's moving house today. José went to his great-grandmother's (85 years old) dinner, and his father turns 38 today.
Adilson saw Cláudia. Mafalda went for a walk with the neighbour

[31] See further: *December – April: The Portela Road.*

from the 7th floor and saw a woman's bag and a cell phone that someone had lost. Guida fell at the Damaia station. Indira won two bobbles, a Pokémon tape, and another bobble for her birthday. Iolanda has a tooth that grew in crooked.
After the *Read, tell and show* moment, all learners from both classes work on the interviews we collected in the neighbourhood.
This assignment, plus four more pupils from an absent colleague in the classroom, makes the atmosphere a bit more hectic.
But the math workshop following is going well nonetheless. I remain concerned about Guida, who has stopped all production at the moment. I don't know if it has to do with the fatigue from traveling home, now that you live so far from the school.
In the afternoon, we write the collective letter to the correspondents.
The following plan work matches what I thought it would be: lots of math games, some computer work, and towards the end, some filing and some geoboard.

Wednesday, May 24th

The *Read, tell and show* activity is disrupted because we start with fewer desks in the classroom and the school day is organised differently due to the compulsory assessment tests in the 4th grade classes. Luís knows that his mother left work later, Cláudia is overjoyed because her father called, Guida saw Aida when she came to school, Aida had to have her ears treated and it hurt a little, Iolanda's aunt gave her younger brother his porridge. When I ask if she also sometimes likes to eat porridge, she happily says yes, and there are many others who like it too.
Soraia says her mother turned 23 and bought a women's perfume.

She went on a catechism trip and that's why she didn't come to school on Monday. Mafalda played with her friend Catarina, Andreia saw Ana when she went upstairs, Adilson's sleeps already in the lower bed so won't fall anymore, Indira played with a friend from the neighbourhood.
The math problem continues around the floor plan of the room, where we try to reduce the other numbers, which are not multiples of 10, to a 1:10 scale.
Then we have a short language workshop that goes well, with a lot of work for the correspondents.
In the afternoon, the soccer group start presenting their work, but I stop them so they can prepare better. We discussed some things together, but an hour after the usual school end time, it's still not all done.
During the day, Indira gradually fades away, and by the end of the day she has a high fever.

Thursday, May 25th

Indira is not in, nor is Soraia. Cláudia is happy, her father called again. Sátia announces that she's going to the doctor in the afternoon for her vaccinations. Luís went to the gymnastics dance and showed off Cape Verdean dances with a girl. Aida's mother is sick, she can't take Aida to the doctor. Cíntia says that the school appeared on television, and that she saw director. André is going to have ear surgery again. (Sátia's comment: *"So you can hear better?"* And Jéssica: *"Is that why you speak badly?"* André: *"Yes"*).
José says that his father already has the jeep and that it has two gearshift levers, one for normal driving and one for four-wheel

drive.
Mafalda has a funny story about balls she threw over a wall, and she tells it as if it were a math problem. We conclude that she had 16 balls and ended up with 11 because she lost 5. Jessica went shopping and bought straws at the kiosk.
Adilson was startled by his father when he came to wake him up, and Iolanda hurt her finger on her way to school.
The text work is going very well...
Then, the math workshop, where I help Cláudia with carrying calculations, where Edmar amazes me with his division problems, where Luís prepares the green multiplication test, and where, generally speaking, things work.
In the afternoon, we have a choice of texts, brutally manipulated by Cláudia.
After that, we'll move on to the plan, with background music.

Friday, May 26th

It was a quiet day, although with more children, because a colleague was sick. I sent others away, citing a lack of desks, as there were more requests from two other classes without a teacher.
In the *Read, tell and show* segment, interrupted by a radiant Director who came to announce that for the learners in my class, the math test would be a piece of cake if they were in the 4th grade, we heard that Cláudia's father is coming home for the weekend and that there will be a little party because of it. Mom bought many small bottles of perfume. Sátia met Adelino's brother at the doctor's, José has Nike shoes, so we talked again about the Greek origin of the name, Andreia has a wound, Mafalda saw the cat licking the meat

display case at the restaurant (she found it *funny*, but to me *a priori* it doesn't seem right...) Guida is going to sleep at her godmother's house, André came with Cláudia, whom he met along the way (when I ask if he didn't get slapped, there's laughter), Adilson mistakenly put on his sister's shoe, and Indira is once again inventing the house of a non-existent godfather.

Next, we'll spend a long morning drawing up the floor plan for the room.

The plan evaluation is carefully managed by Indira, who collects the plans and delivers them to us at the end. The readings are quite honest.

In the afternoon, at the Council, Indira isn't leading so well. Cíntia is the secretary for the first part; we have to switch Indira with Iolanda to give the floor, and then things go a little better. There's a long discussion about Indira because of a rubber band (for the geoboards) that she cut, a discussion in which many participate, but many are beating around the bush, and only after a while does a proposal from Sátia emerge, which is immediately voted on: "whoever damages rubber bands will have to pay for them".

Another discussion is again about José. This time it is decided that if he punches again during his travels in the room, he will have to work alone, on the large multi-proposal table.

There's a big discussion about the exchange of responsibilities. Adelino will go to the computer, if in the meantime Bernardo can go to the reading cards, which will depend on what Cíntia chooses, because Jessica doesn't mind leaving the newspaper (Mafalda) to take care of the math files...

Sátia becomes responsible for purchasing and sales, André takes

over as head of the library, because Cláudia only wants to be in charge of draft paper. Luís and Adelino switch places, as do Andreia and Ana.
The tables will be spaced out to make it easier for us to move around.
Meanwhile, it's 2:30 PM. A short break for a drink and bathroom, and then we get back to work: José and Adilson are giving a brilliant presentation on the extreme sports project. We learn that *wind* actually means “vento”, that *aquatic* and *aquarium* come from the same root, and that it leads to the word água (water). The classroom gains three more puzzles, made with Isabel from the library.

Monday, May 29th

Read, tell and show takes too long. Iolanda had a visit from the uncles living in Talaide. Adelino slept in the new house, which is on the second floor. André says his father hit his brother but doesn't know why. Andréia saw José yesterday. He was eating ice cream.
Soraia went to the *Nossa Senhora da Rocha* fair yesterday. She rode the bumper cars. Her father couldn't fit on the carousel because he's too fat. She saw a boy with respiratory problems. Indira went horseback riding with her aunt; it was a long way from here, she had to go by bus and boat. On Sunday she went to see another uncle. Mafalda went to the *Nossa Senhora da Rocha* fair. She found a dog full of ticks. José also went to the fair, and his father came home drunk and broke a plate. Luís says he went to the popular fair, where he rode the bumper cars. José almost gets into a fight with Luís over the bumper cars when he says there aren't any at the fair,

but Luís is right. I didn't understand the reason for this dispute. Jessica also talks about the Nossa Senhora da Rocha fair, which she visited. Adilson went to his cousins' house who live nearby. Aida went to Jumbo hypermarket and heard "*a stupid conversation between women*" she said, "*as one was telling the other that their daughters each already have two computers".* Cláudia says that her cousin had shortness of breath and became completely still[32].

After that, we organise the week with lots of Pokémon, the end of the year to organize, and the soccer presentation to end. The class newspaper needs a revamp. We're organising until recess.

What follows is a great language workshop, except for José who, as Indira calms down, is becoming increasingly impossible.

But everyone else works with dedication.

After lunch we have a big problem. One of the assistants hit some children with an umbrella.

We analyse the issue, and spend three-quarters of an hour on it.

1. Aida and Iolanda ask to go to the bathroom.
2. The assistant says no, but lets another boy in.
3. Aida asks to go inside again to use the bathroom. José, Sátia, Guida, Jessica, and Luís join her, even though they say they know the rule is *one at a time.*
4. The assistant again says no, without giving any explanation.

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[32] She will be in our group two years later. The "shortness of breath" is a severe form of epilepsy that was regularly untreated. In 2005, the issue of referring the child for medical help is resolved, thanks to the tireless work of the support teacher who joined the team in 2003.

5. The group takes advantage of the open door to enter and hide on the first floor of the school. They try to sneak downstairs to go to the bathroom.
6. The assistant grabs an umbrella, after saying "*You'll see,*" and hits Aida, Jessica, and Sátia with it.
7. They only go to the bathroom after the entrance bell rang.

It is very difficult to make the children, who are obviously outraged, understand that they too have broken the rules from point 5 onwards. Faced with the assistant's "no," they should have raised the issue with another assistant, with me, or with the principal.

After that conversation, which, as Luís says, seems like a problem, we watch the Pokémon tape brought with the hero Pikachu. I learn a few things about wild and domesticated Pokémon and also understand the plot of the story: everyone wants to be a Pokémon tamer. The boy doesn't get his first choice because he arrives late to the building where the Pokémon are chosen, and so he ends up with Pikachu, who seems a little different as he doesn't like the PokéBall.

It seems to me the story doesn't have much development. Let's try making our own comic strip and putting on a little play with the Pokémon as the main characters.

Tuesday, May 30th

In the Read, tell and show segment, Sátia needs to recount how her father beaten her brother with a belt. Then he locked him in his room. All because he didn't go to school. Cíntia saw Indira, Luís, Jéssica, and Cláudia leaving the after-school activities together. José

had dinner at 10 because his father was working. For some time now, he's been making up stories about living alone with his father, but he can't say why (meanwhile, I already know from the assistant that it's not true that his mother was hospitalised). André saw Soraia at the kiosk buying carrots. Jéssica recounts that her mother was sleeping on the sofa, her sister didn't see her and sat on top of her, and her mother hit her.
Luís rode his bicycle; a screw came loose and now the chain is loose too. Iolanda went to André's mother's house to buy sweets. Adilson saw Cláudia. Indira saw Cíntia's mother.
The text work is going well.
In the afternoon, I can't get the children interested in the school's collective end-of-year project. And truly, for our class, it is rather ineffective.
The plan work was also a bit noisy. A day without much excitement.

Wednesday, May 31st

Lots of *Read, tell and show*: Mafalda's father turned 51. Andreia found a 'bouncy ball' she had lost some time ago. Cláudia announces that her mother is going to Lidl. On Saturday, José is going to the Algarve with his father, who is going to work with his boss. The father bought José a jacket. Jessica is going to Jumbo with her father tomorrow. Indira played at her friend Ruth's house. Iolanda announces that the after-school program has a van to pick up the children from school.
Aida saw Mafalda's brother on his way to the doctor. He was with his mother and sister.
Luís went to Jumbo hypermarket with his mother. Cláudia asked

which checkout he paid at. He paid at checkout number 34. *"And you had more or less than 34 items?" "Less, naturally!"* Adelino went to play at Luís' house and liked it. He saw an accident where a car crashed so hard it lost a wheel. Guida already has a pass but only for suburban public transport busses. Sátia has another aunt at home, who comes from Cape Verde. She doesn't know if she'll stay or not.

Soraia has a new shirt for the rehearsals of the *Carnaxide popular march*, which end at one in the morning (which explains why she doesn't show up some mornings a week).

André saw Pascal at the bakery.

The problem that the correspondents sent leads to a good discussion.

The language workshop is going wonderfully. The organisation of the first part of our Pikachu story is also going well[33].

After this intellectual effort, and in anticipation of outlining the beginning of this story tomorrow, we start a plan working session that would have been exemplarily calm, were it not for the violent fight between Indira and one of our four first-year visitors.

Thursday, June 1st

Children's Day: cupcakes for snack, drawing in the afternoon, nothing crazy, but with a little music.

Read, tell and show. Cláudia excitedly recounts that her mother saw

[33] It was published at the site www.freewebtown.com/pascalcorner/turma. But almost all freewebs disappeared suddenly, this one too, and with it the page and all assignments.

Captain Roby (A television series about romanticising the life of a Portuguese scammer). Mafalda walked up the street with the interns Andreia and Inês. She met them along the way. Sátia has a cousin whose birthday is tomorrow. José slept at his grandmother's house, in her bed, and almost fell to the floor. André saw Soraia yesterday and today Pascal, buying a poster at the kiosk. I confirm and show the poster with all Pokémon and their transformations, which I bought to put up in the classroom. Aida dreamed she was in France. Her parents have been there, but she hasn't. Soraia thought this morning that it was still night, but then realised it was time to get up. Iolanda says that the after-school activity room changed location because it's raining inside the windmill where it is located. Indira went to the park. Luís is changing after-school activity centre and deserved two ice creams yesterday.

Adilson says that his father joined the police force. What he meant to say is that his father went to the police station.

The writing assignment was interesting. We abandoned the planned assignment because we have a more urgent matter to attend to: I told the children that the Portuguese edition of the magazine *Sesame Street* that the group subscribes to is going to end because they don't have the money to continue it.

They are shocked. They immediately decide to write a letter. I suggest we write to the magazine's first editor here, whose name is Maria Emília Brederode Santos. And in the afternoon mail, the letter is already on its way.

The math workshop is held in great peace and quiet.

The afternoon is filled with drawing, cutting, and pasting the story of Pokémon at Outurela.

We make good progress, despite Cláudia's outburst, the reason for which I didn't understand. Most people focus on the drawing, and the little book is pleasant.
We quickly assess the day, and leave happy and content.

Friday, June 2nd

Read, tell and show Luís went to Colombo shopping centre and its play center and arrived home close to midnight. José went to Carrefour hypermarket. Cláudia fell off the slide and scraped her arm. Aida received a scarf from her mother that she bought in Benfica. Iolanda says that the after school activities van is still not working, and that they will only change address next week. I announce that the paints have finally arrived and praise the work on the Pikachu story (throughout the day, many will pick up the story to reread it).
Andréia shows the dress her mother bought. André's dog ran away and hasn't returned yet. Guida asks if the dog has ever had puppies. Soraia bought candy, but she didn't bring the Pokémon joined because she forgot them.
Jessica says her sister wet the bed. His mother recently took his diaper off. Sátia saw the cake made by her cousin Luís, from teacher Márcia's class. It's for the soccer game.
Cíntia saw Jessica yesterday. Mafalda says a convertible hit a van and ended up against the Sumol wall. She doesn't know the model, but when Luís draws car brand symbols on the board, she immediately says it was one of those cars with a little star: a Mercedes.
Adilson had bad luck while ironing. He ironed a sweater and burned

his arm. Bernardo went to McDonald's. He got a Donald Duck.
Guida went to Cíntia's house and watched Dragon Ball, among other things. Her mother gave her a puzzle. It's a drawing of animals.
In math moment, we're doing something new: creating problems for a given numerical expressions we first invent. We are inspired by a problem our correspondents invented and sent in, and we already have 5 very challenging problems.
In the afternoon, the Council is running very well.
Right at the beginning, there's a complaint from Aida that she feels mocked by José. He confirms. When we ask Aida what she proposes, she doesn't quite know. I ask who feels mocked by José. There are 15 hands in the air. Guida proposes him to stay isolated, where he can't hurt anyone. It's decided that on Monday, he stays isolated from the others, only having the teacher to help him, and that at the end of the day we'll evaluate whether it continues like this or not.
Indira slipped into the classroom during recess to open the door behind the assistants' backs. It is agreed that Indira apologize to all of them.
A new problem with José will keep him working alone for three days. Cláudia wants to switch places because of José, Sátia switches because of Jéssica.
When I bring up Guida's difficulties at the moment and explain why I propose taking the individual planning out of her hands, there's a long silence. I ask if she agrees, and after a long 3 minutes of silence, she accepts, indicating Cláudia, Cíntia, Jéssica, and Sátia as her support team.

Finally, the group decides that they will correspond with the interns, who are saying goodbye today.
It's 2:20 PM. Bathroom break, and we'll be back to a selection of texts.
José pays the price for his behaviour: Luís put him as the last reader, knowing that this way he will get less attention. Furthermore, José, a poor diplomat, reads as the first of two texts he presents, one that starts with *"Adelino is greedy".* From then on, the possibility vanishes of having a text chosen...
We end the afternoon with 20 minutes of free time, which goes so well that we only manage to leave the room well after the scheduled time.

Monday, June 5th

The class is emptier again... 3 fewer adults, and besides that, only 16 children show up. Luís, Adilson, and José must be recovering from the weekend. Soraia comes to show off an impressive black eye, before going to the doctor with her mother. Aida brings a text she wrote at home to read during reading time. Cláudia comes to give me the story she wrote before trying to create a problem statement with Friday's numerical expression.
Iolanda gives the floor in *Read, tell and show* and she does it reasonably well. In the afternoon, when we finish the Pokémon story, it will be less easy because Cíntia is almost asleep. At the end of the day, Indira more or less steps in to give a summary of the day's events.
But in *Read, tell and show* Cláudia shows her arm, completely infected and looking like raw flesh. She recounts that she went to

the doctor and he said she needed to apply Betadine® and an ointment, and that it was best to go to the hospital if her arm turned red... To me, it looks like a serious infection of "(*one or another*) *coccus".* She also happily announces that her father won't be working in the North during the holidays. Iolanda saw Cláudia's mother. Adelino says his father is going to the North (he'll type this on the computer during the day). He also says that the front door was locked, and they had to enter through the window. It had to be his brother Eduardo, because everyone else is afraid of heights.

Mafalda shows off the sneakers a friend gave her. She says she wears a size 31/32 but the sneakers are a 33/34. She also mentions that there was an accident at Sumol [Limonade Brand, with a great production unit near to here house] on Saturday, where a computer exploded, and that the firefighters were there. Edmar announces that his birthday is almost here (on the 13th). Indira says she "got beaten up" because she broke a glass and a plate. She went to bed weeping.

Andreia played with her 5-year-old cousin. Guida went to visit a cousin in the hospital who was burned all over his body with hot milk (she points to her chest and stomach). She thinks he will have to stay in the hospital for a long time.

Aida shows off the new sandals her grandmother bought for her. They walked from Buraca to Benfica. Her 4-year-old sister is having trouble giving up diapers.

Jessica says her mother didn't want to get up early to go to the doctor. Her grandma broke her foot. She also says she saw Luís, lining at a checkout at Jumbo.

André went to the Cacém fair. There were many things. Then he ate

at Pizza Hut. Sátia saw one of the assistants at the Oeiras fair with a man (Soraia: *"Does he has white hair?" "Yes." "Then it's her husband."*). They won a piggy bank, a keychain, a lighter, and decks of cards. She also shows the sneakers she was given as a birthday present.

We organise the week: they put in the Pokémon project, the reading of texts, the problems, the workshops. They propose a writing workshop to write a farewell letter to the readers, when I remind them that finishing the last class newspaper of the school year is important this week. I also remind them that there's still the soccer project to present. Everyone makes their own work plan for the week, and we have plenty of time left to pick up the problem where we stopped on Friday.

Then, we set off for a very calm language workshop, where Cláudia helps Guida well, who is later replaced by Sátia and Jessica. Cláudia will also help Indira. Meanwhile, I help Cíntia with reading, Bernardo and Adelino with the language worksheets, and I also support Isaías a little, who in turn relies on Andreia, and I work also with Indira.

We are all frustrated when lunchtime arrives.

The afternoon starts off a little more chaotic. There were problems at the playground... Even so, we manage, with some difficulty, to complete the rest of our Pokémon story.

I promise to transcribe what was said so we can draw the rest tomorrow. We'll spend the rest of the afternoon doing plan work. I practice multiplication tables with six girls while others play checkers, draw, do language cards, and finish texts on the computer. Mafalda forgot the newspaper again. At the end of the day, Indira coordinates the tidying up, and it goes perfectly. The evaluation is done after three, something that happens quite often

lately.

Tuesday, June 6th

We have visitors in the room, four of them. José enters in good spirits, and I show him to his spot, isolated from the others, an observation post – a huge table that serves as a platform. He spend the whole morning up there, working alone and watching the rest of the group in action.

In the segment *Read, tell and show* Sátia mentions that she has a pain in her foot because of her new shoes. She went to a friend's house. Cláudia has news from her father, who called. Jessica's uncle arrived from Cape Verde. She laughs a lot when Luís asks how he came. By plane, of course! She announces that on Thursday they will go to Jumbo to buy a cell phone for him to take home.

Guida arrived home at nine, later than usual. Aida brings a text in which talks about her “rubbers”, the rubber gloves for all kinds of work she uses. Iolanda already has 18 television channels wherein one can loose oneself. Cable TV has arrived! Mafalda tells the story of a paper ball that ended up in her mother's bath and fell apart. Luís explains that he didn't come to school yesterday because he was carrying furniture for his grandmother's move and is very tired. Bernardo went to buy "things" at Jumbo with his father. Edmar knows they're going to turn on the electricity in the new house today. Adilson went for a walk in the North and saw a porcupine. Adelino saw Luís near the stairs of his house. André went to *Fabulândia* and to Intermarché. Indira saw Edmar.

Then, we work on Sátia's text to put it on the notice board.

The math workshop is going well. They are very focused on the

exercice cards...
In the afternoon, José has permission to participate in the drawing work for the Pokémon project. The work is less confusing than when we did the first part, and at the end of the day, it doesn't take much to organize and tidy up the story papers. They start talking about the theater soon after. In the end, we agree that José can take his place on Thursday. A quiet day.

Thursday, June 8th

The *Read, tell and show* section is huge. Cláudia went to take photos for her passport. André says his mother bought "this" for him: it's a Pokémon, but which one? They look it up on the poster. It's one of the lesser-known ones.
Sátia recounts that her brother ran away from home without their father knowing anything. He was very angry because it happened on the very day that some boys drowned on Carcavelos beach. Incidentally, they know who they are: they lived in Outurela. Guida came to school with Cíntia. José says he went to the pool called “das maçãs”. He also says that two uncles and a grandmother died in a car accident involving his uncle's BMW. We have some doubts about the veracity of the story. Indira slipped in the bathroom and fell. Andréia went to her sister's house. Edmar says his father has already installed a light fixture in the bathroom. Luís informs that the deadline for moving house is the 15th. Adilson was startled when he woke up. Iolanda says her brother will receive his first communion. Jessica announces her sister Mônica's birthday party. Mafalda says her friend Catarina lent her a doll. Adelino watched the Pokémon movie at a friend's house. Soraia shows off the new

sandals her mother bought for her. Aida saw a horse-drawn cart in Cacém. We deduced from the story that it's one of those carts used for tourist excursions. Louis took a bath with his cousin.
We work on Indira's text, the last one, which closes the last newspaper of the class.
We arrange to combine the language and math workshop work because of the holiday, which changes our routine. The workshop is very quiet.
In the afternoon, we do shadow puppetry experiments before plan work.

Friday, June 9th

Another long *Read, tell and show*: Luís bought toothpicks at the store. Adilson thought he had his shirt on backwards, but in the end he didn't. Cláudia announces that her mother is going to buy 5 of those things that Andreia has on her head (scarves). The father arrives today from the North, he only returns to work on Tuesday. José fell in the street, he didn't cry. He saw Soraia leaving the café. André announces that he is going to Jumbo. Andreia confirms that her mother bought the new headscarf for her at the *"new school"* (the new schoolbuilding for 1 to 9 grades). Edmar saw Adilson. Jéssica saw Luís near his aunt. She went to get a 'bouncy ball' with 100 escudos. Aida says she heard her mother tell Eleanor to wake her sister, but then it seems she was still sleeping because she was actually woken up (?). Indira has a new TV. The others ask if she also has a new house. Mafalda says her friend Catarina ate at her house. She played with her brother. Cátia was there too.
Iolanda says the café has already been robbed twice. But what they

steal is of minor importance. Luís even considers it to be the actions of boys proving themselves to the leaders of teenage gangs. Adelino says his mother bought him a new bag.

The rest of the day has difficult moments: first I try to start a discussion around the numerical expression, which we began working on last Monday, but and I fail. The leaders are not at all interested, and I remember too late that 5 children were absent on Monday.

I gather the proposals, but it's impossible to process the data together. After getting angry, I propose a work plan, and under the effect of the abrupt 'change in weather', the plan is impeccable, but unsustainable... Even so, things get done until lunchtime, with four visitors complicating the routines.

In the afternoon, the Council meeting starts off with some difficulty, but develops very well: peace, quiet, a discussion well-led by André and Rodrigo, with a late intervention from Isaías as well. André is the one with style!

Based on the agenda, we decided on several important things:

– José is once again forced to work in isolation from the group for two days, one of which is spent in his 'observation post'.
  This is the result of a long argument over minor aggressions against Guida, Mafalda, and Aida, but it is mainly Jessica and Sátia who are unforgiving.
– Indira stays close to those who support her in her planning and plan work, because of the little pricks that have reappeared.
– There are several discussions about Cláudia, almost always because she interferes (or allows others to interfere) in the organisation of classroom life, even if one she is not in charge.

We discovered that several students turn to her instead of the person in charge. She is both agreeable and disruptive. We re-evaluate the work of the parents in general and the person in charge of the geoboard and monitoring the use of rubber bands in particular.

– There are several changes of location, just like in all other weeks, motivated by minor disagreements.
– Cláudia criticises those who disturb her while she's doing a test. We agreed that anyone doing a test during plan work can sit alone at a table.

It's twenty minutes to three. The problem is postponed until Monday, so we still have time to choose texts.

Monday, June 12th

News in *Read, tell and show*: Edmar announces that his birthday is tomorrow. Andréia went boating. Iolanda went to her brother's first communion. Guida went to catechism on Saturday and spent time with several friends from the neighbourhood. Afterwards, she stayed at an aunt's house. Adelino went to a cousin's birthday party. André went to Carcavelos beach. The flag was green. His mother bought him a watch. Sátia went to the market and bought a pretty headscarf she is wearing. Her father gave it to her. Her aunt was bored and stayed home while they went to Mass. We also noticed that she doesn't have dinner at home, but that she eats at another aunt's house every day.

Luís went to the beach with his uncle and cousin. They just went for a swim.

Mafalda received a lot of clothes from a friend. *"Again?"* says

Cláudia. *"Well, that's how it is with poor people!"* replies Mafalda. Bernardo says that his father fell asleep on the sofa. He's going to the Algarve next weekend.
Cíntia says her mother bought her some new shoes. Jessica went to sleep at her godmother Fátima's house. She laughs when I ask if she's a fairy godmother. She's just a godmother, she says. Aida says her mother bought her new clothes at Jumbo. She has a tooth that's almost falling out (in the afternoon, the tooth falls out, which makes her say that the news came really "fresh" and at the right time). Isaías saw Iolanda, and Cláudia bought 5 scarves at the fair and announces that Miguel ('my boyfriend') has his birthday tomorrow.
After organising and preparing the individual plans, we have a good problem-solving session, followed by a very relaxed language workshop, where I read and paste texts with Sátia, Luís, Cláudia, Edmar, Jessica, and Mafalda, all good readers, although Jessica hesitates with longer words.
We reach the end of the morning without even realising it.
In the afternoon, we talk about the theater script.
Then we have a long work plan session, where we put together the newspaper, where a group of girls builds a new house, where the soccer boys prepare there project, where there's a lot of computer work, and where some become more skilled at the game of checkers.
Tidying up is time-consuming, as often. Bernardo evaluates the plan at the end of the day.

Tuesday, June 13th

There are still 4 absents, but Indira has returned and becomes very

unstable during the day.
In the *Read, tell and show* segment, Mafalda recounts seeing the Lisbon popular marches. We talk about a Voz do Operário children march, but nobody saw any correspondents... Cláudia says her father returned to the North today and won't be back until Sunday. At the end of the day, she'll go to Jumbo with her mother.
André is going to the doctor this afternoon to have his ears treated. Tomorrow is his mother's birthday. She's turning 49 and will have a party.
Iolanda says that her mother bought new shoes and that at the after-school activities they will take a shower with a hose.
Aida helped her father with the steaks. She also teaches how to cook snails: water, put the snails in the water until it boils, add oregano, garlic, chili pepper or hot sauce, and salt. Jessica also has new shoes that her mother bought. CÍntia painted her nails under her bed so her mother wouldn't see.
Andreia recounts how her mother braided her father's hair, and that she later undid her own braids. Indira talks about her aunt who made curls for her grandfather. Isaías saw Pascal.
After *Read, tell and show* text work.
The math workshop that follows is chaotic. They take a long time to get started, but then there is some output. I have to separate Indira from Adelino, and Guida runs off again to do the unregistered activities.
In the afternoon, the plan work quickly gets underway, but without much progress.
A somewhat hectic and very tiring day...

Wednesday, June 14th

Read, tell and show. Cláudia, very upset with the whole world, recounts how she fell in the bathtub while brushing her teeth. André went to McDonald's to eat, and Pluto came out of his Happy Meal. He saw Aida. Iolanda shows off the new earrings her mother put on her. Luís saw José at his grandmother's house. He took a shower before leaving home. José has a story about a drunk who stole someone's dinner at McDonald's and ran away. He says he rode a small motorcycle, one of those children's motorcycles, but with gasoline. We talk about 2-stroke and 4-stroke engines. He says he has an uncle who got out of prison (?) after a year and a half. He ended up there because he was assaulted and arrested because the police thought he was the robber (?). Sátia shows some cards that her brother's girlfriend gave her. Today it is her birthday, her name is Vera, and she already gave her brother a kiss on the lips.
Andreia shows the backpack her mother bought for her. It's a teddy bear; Bernardo asks if it has a name, and she says no. Rodrigo saw Luís at the after school activities. Edmar received 1000 escudos from his mother as a birthday present. I put a foot wrong by asking if he had received any more presents: he replies, a little resentfully, he hadn't. Cíntia knows that yesterday was St. Anthony's Day. Aida made some drawings on the computer for the Santa Claus project!
Indira got a beating because she left home without saying anything. She was hit with a belt, it hurt, and she cried.
I propose, as a math activity, to take stock of the year's activities[34].
The language workshop is going well, apart from the instability

[34] See further

shown by Cláudia.
The afternoon is completely filled with plan work, which feels good. They generally work quite quietly, with Indira only arguing with the others twice.
At the end of the day, Cláudia explodes and becomes very rude, I get angry with her and she leaves, upset.

Thursday, June 15th

Cláudia remains angry and only enters after playing. Sátia, on the other hand, is very cooperative and radiant.
In the *Read, tell and show* segment, Isaías recounts seeing Sátia's brother. Joseph says his father left for the Algarve, and that he was left alone with his mother. He goes to the pool "das maçãs" on weekends with a cousin who also has a jet ski. His and Louis's eyes light up when they say the word. Cíntia says her brothers ate all the cakes and sweets at home and left nothing for her.
André went to McDonald's. Today he's going out for dinner, by boat, on the other side of the river.
Luís went to his grandmother's house. Bernardo announces he's going to Karate beach in a van from the association. Aida saw a very cute girl at catechism, with lots of curls and blue eyes. (*"Was she white?" "Of course!" "Not of course! There are mixed-race with blue eyes. Sometimes there are even black people with blue eyes"*). Andreia is going to the beach today (?). Indira received her friend Domingas who stayed overnight. (*"Why?" "Because the other friend didn't sleep there..."*). Mafalda slept at the neighbour's house. They thought she was sleeping, but she heard the whole conversation. (Sátia: *"But you live in a shack?" "Me? No.")*

The text work is simple and easy.
Next, we have the math workshop, where Cláudia continues to be very confrontational, interfering with those who ask for protection, and then she becomes the target. This time, it is Indira who ask for protection against Isaías, and Cláudia has to take refuge, crying with anger. She calms down half an hour later and enter the room, starting to redo the test she threw away last week. Guida has to endure a scolding to get back to work.
The reading of texts is going well. The texts are receiving more balanced votes, more based on the text itself than on the author, as was the case some time ago.
Then we return to the plan, with Pokémon, checkers, multiplication tables, drawing, cutting and pasting, a very calm afternoon, despite the heat and instability we have been experiencing these last few days.

Friday, June 16th

Sátia was playing with her friends. Guida wants to know their skin color. They are white.
Cláudia was fighting with her brother because of his Pokémon. They "tied" (?), but their mother hit her brother. Guida put on a show. Aida couldn't sleep because of the heat; she could even fall asleep in the shower... she went to the doctor because of a fissure, and Guida asked what a fissure is. Adelino went skateboarding and fell. Adilson fell out of bed while sleeping. Jessica stayed at her aunt's house and fell because she slipped on the floor. Iolanda already forgot what she was going to say. Luís' cousin slept over, and they slept on the sofa. They didn't watch television because they were

too tired. At the end of the month, his father will fix his bicycle. Isaías saw Cláudia's brother. He was playing soccer in Portela with Alex, André, and Isaías himself. Andreia tricked her mother, saying she didn't have any, but she had all the jelly beans. Mafalda went to Jumbo, and her brother is getting married tomorrow. José says that in the afternoon, his uncle will take them to the beach. Indira fell in the bathtub. André woke up at one in the morning.
The plan, following work with the geoboard, is accompanied by the former interns who are visiting, and proceeds smoothly towards the plan evaluation, effectively directed by Sátia.
The Council is doing very well, with a very effective duo: Sátia and Jessica, both extremely attentive to what is happening and intervening wonderfully.
José, Aida, Indira, and Andreia are excluded from the group for various reasons. Some things are unforgivable, the most serious being that they locked themselves inside the classroom.
After the usual changes of location, we're off to Quinta de Sales, in the sweltering heat.

Monday, June 19th

Guida, Cláudia, and Aida's team already has everything set up before nine o'clock. After the bell rings, they fill out the attendance chart and calendars, and propose to deal with the organisation first. Cláudia managed to control herself until mid-afternoon. After that, she is diabolical with José and Aida.
In the organisation, they propose presenting the "Santa Claus"[35]

[35] In June...

project, the Pokémon theater, a problem, and reading texts aloud. I agree, explaining that we won't have time to correct the texts read aloud. The school year ends next week...

We complete the last lesson plan of the year. They confirm that there are still math and language workshops. In *Read, tell and show* Cláudia shows the scarf her mother bought for her at the *Feira do Relógio*; she also has some new pants and a new blouse.

Sátia went to Carcavelos beach. There were no races and she didn't notice the flag. André went to Torre beach with his parents. Today he's going to the doctor with his mother. Guida wants to know the doctor's name. Iolanda is wearing a very pretty batik dress embroidered with shells, which her father brought from Cape Verde. Mafalda went on a boat trip at sea. There were many waves, and when they docked, she saw fish, she thought they were sardines, but they weren't. Bernardo went to his cousin's birthday party; the cake looked like an Indian. Guida rented and saw the Pocahontas movie on Saturday. Jessica's sister cracked her lip; she fell in the Quinta de Sales. Jessica also says she saw Cláudia yesterday. Sátia laughs a lot when she tells how her brother took off his underwear while sleeping. They ask how she knows; she says she knows because she slept with him. Cláudia asks if he was dreaming about his girlfriend.

Before recess, we still have time to work through a small math problem.

Then we have a dream language workshop, with a lot of production, where word hunting (verbs and nouns) is very popular and where writing little books has returned.

The afternoon is more chaotic, probably because I don't have much

time to deal with some of the problems that arise, which means we only have the sets for the theater assembled at the end of the day, and we have to agree to continue the preparation work tomorrow morning.

Tuesday, June 20th

A day that goes very well. In the morning, we talk in a circle, sitting on the floor. Cláudia shows the hairband that her mother bought for her at the watch fair. Cíntia fell at home, Rodrigo saw Isaías in Portela, Luís rode a mountain bike belonging to a friend of his father. Jessica shows off the shoes her sister lent her, André found 100 escudos. Mafalda played hide-and-seek with her friend and broke a plate. Bernardo is going to the Algarve on Thursday and will only return on Sunday.
Then we do a first rehearsal of our play. Sátia and Aida are the narrators, Luís takes care of the acetates, Jéssica, Cíntia, Guida and Mafalda move the shadow puppets, Iolanda is the large Pikachu, Cláudia plays the role of the woman being robbed, and Jesse, José, Bernardo and Isaías are the robbers, the others are children.
We took the rehearsal to the end, with many stops, of course! Some ideas came up along the way.
The math workshop has an additional language workshop component, but it's going very well. Lots of measuring tapes, exercise cards, and a geoboard. I create weather charts with 10 of them, and indeed, they know very well how to transfer the data to the grid and draw a line graph.
The afternoon is slow to start but we achieve to agree on the work schedule up to the 28th.

Then we have a reading of texts, knowing that we will no longer be working on or presenting the texts we've read. But there is considerable interest.
In the plan work, the Pokémon attack again. There are two fights between Cláudia and José and one with Indira.

Wednesday, June 21st

The day promises to be more difficult, also because there is a manifestation of discontent over the fact that the other 1st and 2nd year grades are going to the Zoo, and we are not. We decide on a trip to the Zoo and the science museum next school year (*in Portugal was (is?) common use that the teachers go along with the children from 1st to 4th grade*). We do a session of *Read, tell and show* led by Bernardo. Cláudia shows the pencils that the principal gave to the class, and says that her father is returning from the North and will stay home until the holidays, when he returns to *"finish the highway"*. Luís knows what Bernardo's news is, because he told him, and that's what he has to say in *Read, tell and show*... Edmar forgot his news. Adelino saw Edmar near the after-school activities centre, in his father's car. Jessica was playing with a girl, who was playing with a dog (without a leash). The girl was bitten on the ear (Iolanda: *"Did a lot of blood come out?"*). Jessica knows she got 10 (!) Stitches.
André says his cousin is arriving from South Africa for vacation and that he's going to the beach tomorrow. Iolanda forgot her news, but comes back on it later to say she went to the new after school activity centre to see things, but that it still smells strongly of paint, and that they're still at the windmill. Bernardo is going to the Algarve and to his cousin's house to swim in their pool. Mafalda

played hide-and-seek.
The issue surrounding the matches in the European Football Championship continues to excite part of the ‘audience’.
After the break, in the 'last language and math workshop', there isn't much work to do. Bernardo however still starts the brown division exercise cards, Cláudia is restarting the blue +/- test for the umpteenth time, and the other little ants are working as usual.
In the afternoon we have two rehearsals for the theater. The first one is very complicated, with many interruptions, the second one goes much better.
At the end of the day, we also agreed to change Friday's schedule because we don't have the classroom overhead projector, which is necessary for rehearsing the part of the play that involves shadow puppetry and therefore stands in the library. We agreed to have a planning session and a meeting in the morning, and watch a movie in the afternoon.

Friday, June 23

A complicated day. In *Read, tell and show* Luís recounts that his mother gave him 150 escudos and that he received money from his father's friend. Cláudia says that her parents will sign the contract for the new car at the brand's representative today. Sátia says that our former classmate Fábio's neighbour was at her house. Fábio wrote “*puta*” (whore) on all the walls of the house (so, after all he can write...). André received a vaccine in Linda-a-Velha. Adilson's mother bought him a game of 4 in a row. Mafalda ate snails and, since she likes snails very much, she was sucking them quickly. Cíntia says that her sister's school ends today. She saw two snakes near the

new after-school activities centre; they were black and green.
Iolanda also ate snails. Her brother was faster. He ate more. She said she might not come in the afternoon because of an outing with ATL, but then she showed up, without us knowing if there was an outing or not.
Jessica says she went to Jumbo and that her aunt went to Cape Verde, to Praia.
The plan work following isn't very productive, except for Aida, Luís, Sátia, Cláudia, and Cíntia. The others are busy drawing Pokémon. We'll only tidy up after noon break.
The Council is doing badly. Cláudia and Luís spend their time provoking each other, and they're making me lose my patience, especially towards the end of the meeting. We're at an impasse with some complaints. We'll have to review strategies for the year, but there's already a certain consensus about *"no more whining"*. Sátia's intervention regarding Cláudia isn't very convincing, but many agree that Cláudia is indeed very provocative. She gets furious when she hears colleagues, and myself, pointing out some not-so-pleasant things she does. A decision to jointly monitor Cláudia's provocations is being difficult to reach.
The other discussions don't really qualify as discussions; everyone is just interested in getting it over with. Only José is brought up again with more insistence, and it mainly concerns some of Aida's complaints. There are some role swaps: Cláudia with Indira and Luís with Soraia. Iolanda will have to change roles in the play because she teased Aida.
In the afternoon, there's a movie. Soraia can't concentrate on the film, nor can Adelino, Luís, José, and Cláudia. Jessica, Mafalda, Aida,

Indira, Cíntia, Edmar, and Rodrigo were very attentive.

Monday, June 26th

A long list of Read, tell and show today. Did they realise it was the last time before the holidays? Cláudia talks about her father who went back to the North yesterday for the whole week. He went to his aunt's house who lives near Sintra. Guida saw Indira in Outurela, with her friend. Her cousin turned 6. Cíntia knows there was a fire in Portela, it was high up in Montijo. In the middle of it all there were robberies: they stole the windows from Luís's grandmother's house. There were 6 fires in total. A man was burned, several houses caught fire. On July 2nd she's going to the fair.
Andreia went to the beach with a cousin. Iolanda saw the community parade in the neighbourhood. Luís went to play hide-and-seek with friends and counted till 60. André went to Carcavelos beach. Aida says that her sister is now sleeping in her bed, in Aida's room. She's outgrown diapers. This new development involves many people.
Mafalda watched the marches on Saturday. Her father broke two bottles. And they were full...
Indira is going to the beach and when she finishes school, she's going to a very far away country by plane, but she doesn't know which one. Bernardo says his mother's birthday is almost here. Adelino shows off the new shorts his mother bought.
Adilson went to his uncles' house to see Luís. José recounts that a rocket fell on a van and returns with new fantasies: his grandfather bought a BMW for the wedding, a small two-door one. Rodrigo saw Adelino, who was with two boys.

Next, I proposed conducting an evaluation of the work year[36].
After that moment, which lasts until about half past eleven, we gather everyone's materials. Lots of confusion and lots of noise.
Around 2:30 PM we have the last theater rehearsal before presenting, which goes terribly.
Obviously.

The story of a socio-centred pedagogical proposal

The transcribed notes from my logbook reveal a pedagogical model familiar to the most active members of MEM, but foreign to the 21 seven-year-old children from eight different backgrounds when I began working with them, and whom I have since introduced to them.
This approach allowed for an exploration of the second-grade curriculum, some aspects of which I describe in the following pages. This is clearly not a complete account. I have also intentionally excluded the more technical aspects.

What we did this year

Given the children's insistence that *we did nothing*, we created a table at the end of the school year (See Table 1 on the following page.), which represents the work done cooperatively over that period. Individual work plans, records, and daily schedules helped to determinate the numbers mentioned.
We were all, including myself, quite impressed by the amount of

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[36] See below

work produced.

Analysing this table was very important because the children were able to visualize the amount of work done throughout the year. In fact, deprived of textbooks – a reference used in comparisons between peers in the after-school activities centre – they rebelled a few times, feeling that *we never worked seriously*. At the same time, it allowed them to better understand what was happening in the group and how each person positioned themselves within the overall work being done.

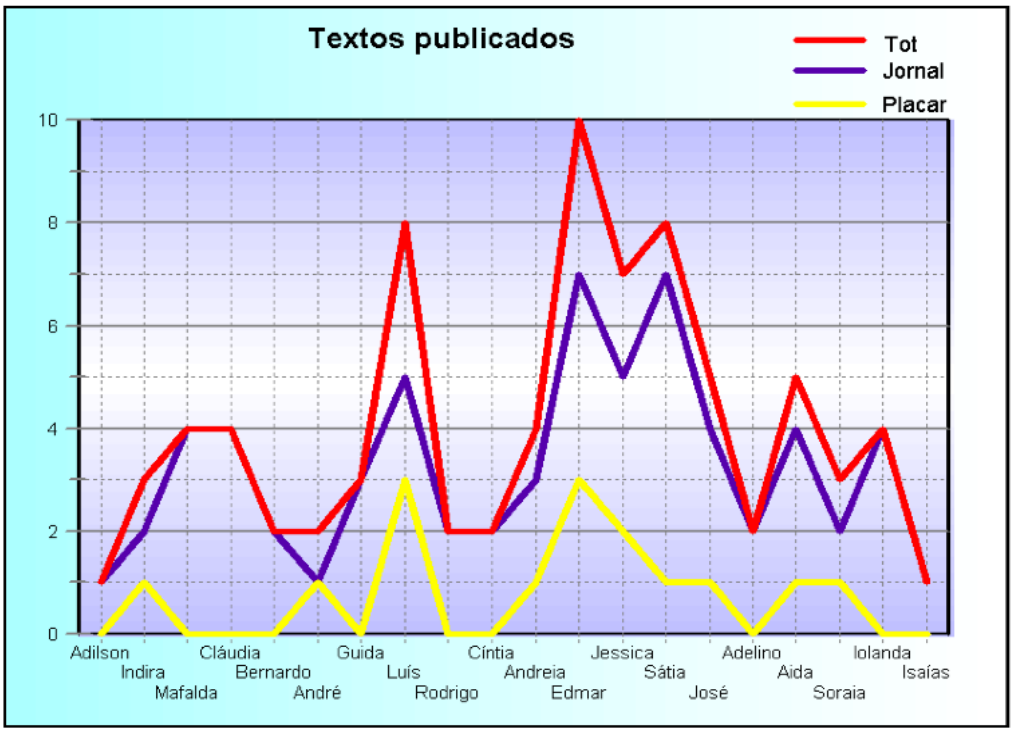
		approximate rounded averages			
What we did:	**Total**	**Per child**	**Per day**	**Per week**	**Child/ week**
Council Meetings	35	35		1	
Free texts on computer	520	26	3	15	0,74
Free text on paper	100	5	1	3	0,14
Text during writing workshop	300	15			0,43
Language exercise chards	2000	100	12	57	2,86
Letters to correspondents	120	6			0,17
Collective stories	2	2			
Published Class Newspapers	8	8			
Cooperative text work	70	4		2	
Read, tell and show	1750	85	10	48	3,09
Hear stories	30			1	
Invent and represent	250	13	2	7	0,36
Read a book or a library chard	*1700*	85	10	49	2,43
Collective Math problems	65	61		2	1,86

Math exercise cards	2200	110	13	63	3,14
Individual Math problems	*800*	40	5	23	1,14
Individual work on geoboard	*1800*	90	11	51	2,57
Small group projects (Research and present)	23	4			
Collective projects	4	4			
External interventions	13	13			
Paintings	350	18	2	10	0,50
Drawings	*2500*	125	14	71	3,57

The numbers in italics are estimates

Table 1: What we achieved this year

Socialisation activities, centred on the group.



Published texts

The newspapers and the scoreboard

Throughout the year we edited eight newspapers and had a notice board next to the office door to display any work we wanted. The graphic *Published texts* gives an idea of the distribution of the 80 published texts.

By cross-referencing the data with the news moments[37] we found that some people wrote more and spoke less (Edmar), some prioritised speaking over writing (Adilson), and some wrote a lot and

[37] See below at *News – Tell, read and show.*

also spoke a lot (Sátia).

The evolution of the choice and discussion of texts

Until mid-November, we had a routine that consisted of collecting the texts from the computer and correcting them collectively in the presence of the author, before sending them to the newspaper (blue line on the graphic).
From mid-November onwards, when it was possible to ask questions without risking the child to say *I never doing this again*, I began suggesting texts to work on together and others to work on in pairs.
Starting on February 22nd, we formalised things a bit: in the first phase, all the texts were voted on, and worked on according to the voting results. All of them were included in the newspaper. From March 16th onwards, there were too many texts for the newspaper. We had texts until the Easter holidays!
That's when we decided to open up a space on the large board outside the classroom for selected texts (yellow line on the graphic) that didn't have room in the newspaper. From then on, the text choices involved recording them in tables.
All of this contributed to the children being able to listen to each other during a reading session, with great attention. Our record was a session of 18 texts, for which we even gave up recess. It's true that it was raining that day!

News changed to Read, tell and show

As can be read on the previous pages, oral storytelling was, for a long time, more important than written storytelling. A

representative and complete survey of 50 of the 165 days of Read, tell and show at various times of the year served as the basis for creating the graphs *When one is telling something at tell, read and show, one speaks in the xth place*[38] which served as the basis for the review discussion with the children.

In a collection of nearly 600 news items over 50 days, 120 were about shopping, consumption, car exchanges, etc.; 161 about family: births, baptisms, deaths, gatherings, etc.; 160 about oneself: teeth, illnesses, minor personal events. Only 3 news items reported something learned at home; 11 were accounts of assaults and robberies; there were also another 46 news items, usually of a violent nature, often about accidents, fires, firefighters, and 18 about domestic violence.

The Council

I think the diary entries in the first part of this chapter testify to how I tried to introduce the Council and make it work. Until the end of November, there was a lot of shouting, interruptions, sometimes even slaps in the middle of discussions. Until December 3rd, only I used the *We Like* column in the class diary. On that day Guida wrote *Cláudia – Guida* in that column. The reason? Cláudia lent her a pencil. The following week it's Adelino's turn: "*I think it's good that Luís helped me*". It was only in March that the children began to systematically write entire sentences in their diaries, following my example.

I was careful not to demand the writing too early, so as not to risk

[38] See below, page 305

the diary being definitively rejected[39]. In April, by decision of the Council, it becomes mandatory to write a complete sentence explaining the subject matter.

In summary, I refer to the five *'fundamental' classroom rules* adopted, all of them decided in Council:

1. We walk around the room without running when we tidy up.
2. Only those who don't disturb their colleagues should leave to go to the bathroom.
3. It is forbidden to make fun of others.
4. We only eat inside the class room when there's a birthday party.
5. Anyone who gropes girls will be banned from recess until the Council decides otherwise

The first law appears in the first period, the next two in the second period, and the last two after Easter.

In addition to these 'fundamental laws', many decisions were made, recorded in minutes, and of the following types:

– *The responsibilities assigned by the Council are posted on a notice board (19.12.99)*.

The decisions (85 in total) are divided throughout the year into these subcategories next to the 5 drafting fundamental laws: establishing operating rules: 28; organisational agreements: 45; and imposing penalties: 7.

Issues considered minor are discussed and resolved, often without

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[39] I remember Luís saying me: "*OK Pascal, I write in my diary, but I'm going to slap him in the face anyway*." Until the end of February, there were many situations where I clearly felt that "*that whole diary and Council thing*" was Pascal's nonsense.

being recorded in the minutes. This is the case, for example, of 'apologising' after a complaint.

The class group: from the inside out and from the outside in.

The studies and projects we carried out this year

A simple listing of the study content, carried out in small groups, reveals a less obvious aspect of citizenship education. It involves small research projects that address certain themes and utilise essential tools for understanding and shaping the surrounding environment.
In addition to a one-page A4 design, titled *Woodlice* and one unfinished project about Santa Claus; the other small group projects were:

1. **The cars**, Luís, Adelino.
   Car manufacturing, some brands, and some "ecological" information.
2. **Barbies**, Sátia, Cláudia, Jessica, Cíntia.
   How Barbie appears; Barbie's age; Why we like Barbie; First attempt at an unfinished survey.
3. **Plants**, Taking care of Nature. Aida, Mafalda, Andréia.
   Oxygen-carbon dioxide circuit; need for forest protection; material recycling.
4. **Airplanes,** José, Adelino, Bernardo.
   Interesting facts about airplanes.
5. **Cell phones**, Sátia, Jessica, Isaías, Soraia, Indira, Cláudia.
   How a cell phone works; history of message transmission; communication culture.

6. **Computers,** Bernardo, Cíntia, Iolanda, Guida, Andreia, Mafalda.
   Computer components; history of the computer; calculation techniques; how the personal computer has changed people's lives.
7. **Bicycles**, Rodrigo, Adilson.
   The cyclist; bicycle parts.
8. **Batman**, Luís, José, Adelino, Edmar.
   Batman's friends and equipment; differences between Batman and other superheroes.
9. **The clocks**, Adelino and Luís.
   History of the clock; construction of a sundial; organisation of the day among us.
10. **The radio**, Adilson, Edmar, José.
    History of radio; why we use radio.
11. **The clothes are beautiful**, Iolanda, Andreia.
    History of clothing over the last three centuries; fashions.
12. **Cameras and photocopiers**, Mafalda, Aida, Bernardo, support staff: Sátia and Soraia.
    Construction of a camera obscura; how these machines work; when they were invented.
13. **The book**, Cintia, Jessica, Guida, support: Sátia.
    Parts of a book; writing supports in different eras and cultures; Gutenberg; rules for using the library; invention of writing.
14. **Pigs**, Rodrigo, Isaiah.
    Pig farming; the piggy bank pig
15. **The money**, Iolanda, Indira, Soraia.
    How money is made; the difference between counterfeit and real money; banknotes and coins.

16. **Desk and night lamps**, Guide, Jessica.
    How does a night lamp works; building an electrical circuit; researching "*Who has a lamp in the bedroom?*" and processing that data.
17. **Easter is for everyone,** Cíntia, Rodrigo, André.
    The story of the Easter bunny; Easter eggs;
    the Christian religion and Jesus.
18. **The washing machine**, Aida, Cláudia, Andrea, Mafalda.
    History of the machine; survey "who, at school, has a washing machine?" and data processing; construction of a model of a washing machine.
19. **Wigs**, Sátia.
    How they are made; who uses them; a history.
20. **Extreme sports**, José, Adilson, Sandro (when in session).
    Water, land, and air sports.
21. **Soccer**, Luís, Adelino, Isaías, Edmar, Bernardo.
    History of football; team organisation; tactics.
22. **The neighbourhood**, Everyone.
    Information about local businesses.
23. **The politicians, The Portela road, and Switzerland**.
    They were attended by everyone, and are reported below.

Letters!

Throughout the year we wrote 16 letters because of our work at school and in the classroom. Tired of not receiving a response from the Oeiras City Council, we compiled a list on May 22nd to see who we had received a reply from and who we hadn't. The result was positive: out of 16 letters, we received 11 replies.

All the letters had a very specific purpose. Here are some examples.

I

As I've already mentioned, we have a small 12-piece puzzle in the classroom, where the pieces are arranged according to twelve questions. It's called LOCO, it's published in Belgium and the Netherlands, and I've always used it in the classroom. In Portugal, I only use the math exercises, and generally, the children love it. It's another aid for the indispensable and necessary practice of calculation. But two sets for twenty people isn't enough. I ordered two more.

After Easter, I show off the new acquisitions and explain that my father, who brought them, gave them as a gift. Everyone is very happy with this news, since, as always, the group is short on money. Bernardo, who had already proposed switching the "games" responsibility with Luís (responsible for the computer), still wants to write a thank-you note:

Hi Bob,
Thank you for bringing us the loco's.
Bernardo
Included with the letter are some drawings by Adelino and Bernardo

And we received:

Oostende, May 11, 2000

To the second-year students,
I am very pleased with your message and the drawings.
I am glad for your friendship.
A hug, Bob

This letter is paired with another letter, from José, accompanied by drawings by Luís:

Bob, thank you for giving us the Loco's.
I know you came to spend your Easter holidays.
And then you went back to Belgium.
Kisses, I hope you come back again soon.

José 08.05.00.

And on May 30, 2000, we received:

Dear friends,
I received the second shipment.
I also hope to return to Portugal many more times.
I really like the drawings and the story of the three little pigs.
I had some difficulty reading the text: I don't know your language well and I can't read some words or letters.
The included postcard shows views of the city where I live.

A hug, Bob

II

Assunção, who was with us on the first Friday of February to meet the class and see how we work, explained during the *Read, tell and show* session that she was interested in seeing some aspects of the classroom organisation and the use of computers in that work context. She spent the whole day with us and participated in the activities planned for that day[40].

A few days later, we received this letter:

Évora, February 7, 2000
Dear friends Pascal and his pupils

[40] See above, February 4th

First of all, I'd like to thank you for the excellent day I spent at your school, and more specifically in your classroom!
You were all very kind to me. It was a pleasure to see you work so well.
I really enjoyed seeing how everyone coordinates and discusses issues, solving problems by talking and helping each other.
If not abusing your kindness, I would like to come back another day and film your work in the room with a video camera.
I also became very interested in working with the computer and would like to show some of my friends how things are done in your room. I propose returning to your room on February 22nd.
What do you think?
I await your reply, a kiss to all from your friend,

Assunção

We agreed that Jessica would reply to the letter, which she did on February 15th:

Assunção,,
You can come and film in our classroom on the 22nd.
With great joy.
A little kiss from all of us...
Signed by Jessica who wrote this
Thank you so much for the letter you sent

On the 22nd, the group was a little agitated because of that huge camera Assunção was carrying around. But little by little, they forgot that someone was filming.

III

When the "money" group is beginning to start its work, the question arises: "*Where are we going to find answers to the questions our*

colleagues have asked us?" We are in the school library, and I ask where they think they can look for the information.

Iolanda looks somewhat desperately at all the books around her and says:

– In the books...
– Do you think it's going to be easy?
– No.
– Why not?
– Because the three of us don't read very well, and besides, the books don't address these questions very well.
– So what do they propose?
– To write?
– ?
– Yes. To write.
– Okay. But to write, you have to know who you want to write to. Who can help you when it comes to money?
– The Bank. Ah! We can write a letter, like we did with the politicians.
– Very well. So, perhaps you should agree on what you want to write

The three of them agree on what they will ask. Iolanda and Indira type the letter into the computer. Soraia starts looking at books, '*to find out about money from a long time ago*'. During the time previewed to work on upcoming projects, this appears:

> *Hello,*
> *We are Iolanda, Indira, and Soraia.*
> *We are 7 and 8 years old and we are in the 2nd grade, in Pascal's class.*

We are working on a project about money.
We would like to know:
- *How can you tell when the money is counterfeit?*
- *Has anyone ever given counterfeit money?*
- *Where the money is made?*

Goodbye and thank you.

A week later, we have a really cool response (from the husband of a colleague working at a bank) that will serve as the basis for the whole project. While we are in a language workshop, Indira writes:

Thank you for sharing these details with us for our project.
We'll send a copy later.
Thanks.

The project copy will be handed in, along with the original 'for viewing', two weeks after the work has been presented in the room.

IV

Towards the end of the year, we had to forgo a language workshop session because we had a more urgent matter to attend to. I mentioned that the Portuguese edition of the *Sesame Street* magazine would come to an end because, as is written in the editorial of the June 2000 edition, there is no money to continue.
They are shocked. "*Of all days, it has to be on Children's Day*" said Cláudia [1st of June in Portugal]. Ever since I started buying Sesame Street for the classroom, they devour that magazine. They immediately decided to write a letter. But as always, the question is: *To whom should I write?*
I suggest to write to Maria Emília Brederode Santos, who was the magazine's first editor.
The letter is sent out in three stages:

Hello dear friend,

We are the boys and girls from the Outurela and Portela school. Pascal is our teachter. We are very sad because "Sesame Street" is going to end, because we used to buy the magazine. Is there anything that can be done to prevent "Sesame Street" from ending?

It was our teacher who told us that Maria was once the editor of the magazine.

A little kiss and a hug

And the afternoon mail already carries the letter. We receive a postcard from Maria Emília, after classes had ended, suggesting that we get to work to make a magazine ourselves.

V

When the students tallied the letters sent and received, they considered the collective letters from the correspondents as a single missive. This made the calculations easier, and as Luís said, "*We always get answers from them.*".

Even so, it doesn't seem to me this inter-school correspondence was as important to my class it was for other classes I've worked with. After the third exchange, I began to notice a certain lack of enthusiasm on the part of our correspondents, for whom my pupils must have been difficult partners. On the other hand, I have the impression that some of my students were left wanting: their classmates went camping without us, they postponed the meetings twice, and we didn't spend any days at the beach with them as we had planned because they were too busy with their camping project

and didn't have time for us[41].

September – November: the politicians

23.09.99
When I put up pictures of political figures on the board, the children immediately recognise Jorge Sampaio, António Guterres, Paulo Portas, and Carlos Carvalhas. They don't know Durão Barroso (but they know the name PSD) or Francisco Lousã (or the Bloco de Esquerda).
These are the men who appear on television and on billboards in the street. Who are they? They're not salesmen or artists. They work a lot on television or in a large house.
But who are they?
Wait: Luís remembers: they're politicians.
Politicians? Yes. But what do they do? This small survey emerges on a piece of office paper:
We think that politicians,
- think and "use their heads";
- work;
- travel;
- protect people;
- We think they work:
  - on SIC (private television netwerk);

[41] This first frustrating experience was compensated for by the success of two years of international correspondence with a class from Leuven in the following academic years, whom we met personally in May 2002 during a visit... to Belgium.

– in a very large house;
– in the office

I suggest writing to them to find out if our hypotheses match reality.

29.09.99

We need the whole afternoon to formulate the questions we want to ask the politicians. I have to interrupt the work several times because of conflicts that erupt and that I have to report to the diary, with great calm and tact.

In the end, the text, acting as a backdrop, boils down to:

What we want to ask politicians:

– How do they do all the work?
– Why are they politicians?
– Why do they work at SIC?
– Do they receive a lot at the end of the month?
– How did they get this job?
– Where do they work?

30.09.99

We created a graph, with the polls published in a newspaper.

Out of every 100, it is thought that the votes will be distributed as showed on that graph.

We understand:

The Socialist Party (PS) is far ahead; the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the PS are the big parties; even if all the undecided voters voted for the same small party, it wouldn't beat the big ones; that's the opinion of the journalists.

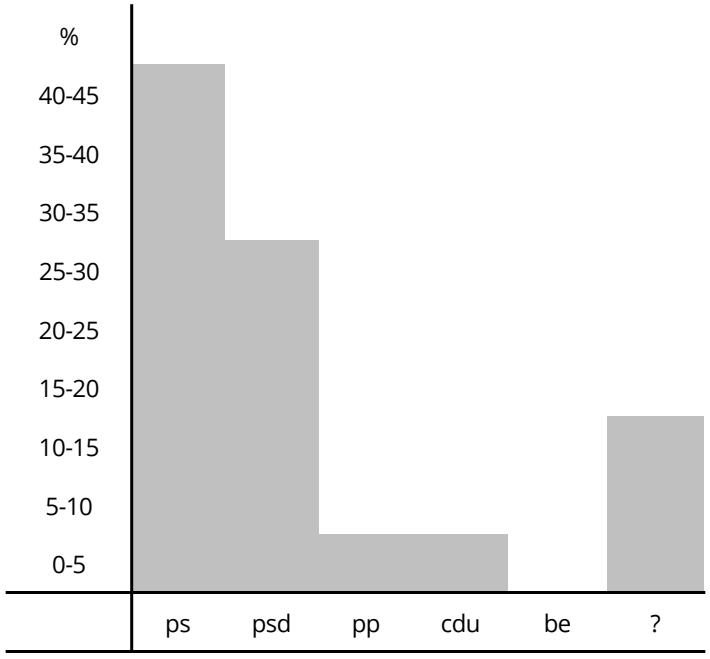


Table 2: simulation of a graph

06.10.99

We sent the following letter to the parties whose addresses we found: PS, PSD, PCP, PP, BE and MPT.

Hello, politicians,

We are students from the Outurela and Portela School.

We put this questions together.

Can you send your answers?

Goodbye, a hug, and thank you.

Class 2C.

Our questions:

- *How do you do all your work?*
- *Why are you politicians?*
- *Why do you work at SIC?*
- *Do you receive a lot at the end of the month?*

– *What did you do to get this job?*
– *Where do you work?*

The letter was accompanied by a written piece of mine.

14.10.99

Since our classroom served as a polling station, we found the results from that section on the door the day after the election. Using the results published in the newspaper on the 13th, we created the following table, noting "out of every 100 people," and compared them:

Poll results	Journalists thought	Votes in our classroom	Votes in the country
P.S.	42	50	44
P.S.D.	29	12	32
C.D.U.	5	26	9
P.P.	6	4	8
B.E.	2	1	2
Others	—	5	1
Undecided	15	—	—
Source:	(Expresso)	(Classroom)	(Público)

Tabela 3: Resultados

We discovered:

– In our classroom, the Socialist Party (PS) received 6 more votes (out of 100) than in the rest of the country;
– In our classroom, the second most popular party was the CDU, but not in the rest of the country.
– In our classroom, the PP received fewer votes (per 100) than in the country as a whole.

On the 18th, we received a response from the PCP (Communist party).

We received another response on November 12th, this time from the Bloco de Esquerda (Left wing party). The letter is more easily accessible because it is short and concise. It contained this paragraph which will prove important:

> *[...] When people ask why we are politicians, our answer is that we are politicians because we live in society, together with other people, and therefore we try to improve things for everyone. That's why, perhaps, we all have to be political and try to change what we think is wrong. If you think something is wrong at your school and you try to change it, what you are doing is already politics, because politics isn't just what's happening on television. [...]*

We decided not to wait any longer for other letters, and we compiled our questions along with the answers we received from these two parties:

1. How do you do your work?
   PC: Our work is voluntary. We do it because we enjoy doing it.
   BE: We try to change what is wrong.
2. Why are they politicians?
   PC: Everyone is political. Parties bring together people who think more or less the same way about things.
   BE: We are political because we live in a group: society.
3. Why do they work at SIC?
   PC: Politicians don't work at SIC. They are invited occasionally to talk about what's happening in the country.
   BE: Politics isn't just television.

4. Do you receive a lot at the end of the month?
   PC: No. We often put in money from our own pockets[42].
5. How do they get this job?
   PC: We help people in the neighbourhood where we live. When there are many of them, they can vote for us.
6. Where do they work?
   PC: Some work as employees for the party. Others have their own jobs and do politics in their free time.
   BE: We work everywhere, alongside other people.

This work served as a springboard for other projects in the same year and for writing to the presidential candidates in 2000. We quickly received a response — handwritten! — from centre-right candidate Joaquim Ferreira do Amaral and left wing candidate Antonio Abreu.

December — January: Switzerland

A news article published in Expresso in December 1999, concerning children from immigrants being refused admission to the school, sparked a heated discussion.
I introduced the topic on the morning of Monday, December 13th, saying:

> Imagine the Principal enters the room and says: the Cape Verdean children all have to leave the room, the Portuguese children can stay. The Roma children go to another room and the Guinean boy too. The Belgian teacher can leave.

[42] An answer the children didn't grasp. They were thinking about the political work of members of parliament and ministers, who are paid to do so.

Several people: She can't do this!

P: But this is what's happening in Switzerland: look at the article I brought. (I'll read part of the article).
What can we do?

Guida: We wrote to the President of the Republic.

P: He doesn't have much to do with it, but okay, we can write.

Sátia: We wrote to the politicians.

Joseph: But they are Portuguese, and where is that, Pascal?

P: In Switzerland.

Iolanda: In Switzerland? My aunt lives there.

Bernardo: We need to write to the Swiss politicians.

P: But how?

Sátia: When I go to Cape Verde, I pick up a document from a house that is also an office and is located in Cape Verde.

Luis: I know! It's called... (thinks for a long time)... I can't remember anymore!

P: Do you mean embassy?

Luis: That's it, the word Pascal said.

Sátia: Is there a house like that in Switzerland too, Pascal?

P: I think so, I'll look into it.

After the Christmas holidays, we revisited the idea of sending a letter. I let them know that I found the embassy's address (which is easier than finding the addresses of some Portuguese political parties...) and on January 11th, we make decisions.

P: What did we write in our letter?

Isaías: I think it's wrong that they do that to the boys.

Mafalda: I think it's wrong too.

Iolanda: It seems they want to send them back to their country!
Cláudia: They have the right to go to school, because others are no better than others just because they are Swiss.
Luis: That's not how it is here because we're not selfish.
After this brief discussion, we drafted the following letter:

Carnaxide, January 11, 2000

Your Excellencies,

Our teacher read us a newspaper article that said there is a town in Switzerland (Rorschach) where primary school children who are not Swiss are not allowed to be in the same classrooms as Swiss children.

We have a class with students from Cape Verde, Portugal, Roma, and Guinea-Bissau, and our teacher is Belgian. And we have no problem with that.

We think it's wrong that they're doing this to the children. It seems like they want them to go back to their country.

We believe they have the right to go to whichever school they want, and we believe that others have no more rights simply because they are Swiss.

We're glad that things aren't like that here at our school, perhaps because we're less selfish.

We sent this letter to the President and to the Swiss Embassy to say that this is wrong.

A little kiss from all of us.

On February 10th, we received a response from the Swiss Embassy, in French, with a great deal of information about Switzerland and an explanation of why unconstitutional decisions are sometimes made.

I compiled a small collection of the submitted documentation, which I displayed in the room on February 16th.

Response to our letter to the Swiss embassy.

To understand the answer:

In Switzerland, there is no Minister of Education like in Portugal.

Switzerland has three different parts, with three different languages.

Each part of the country organises the school system as it sees fit.

It just have to respect a few general rules:

These rules are in the most important law: the Constitution.

People can make decisions at Council Meetings.

These councils are from the city or region where they live.

Sometimes they make decisions that are not in accordance with the Constitution.

That's what just happened.

The letter:

Dear students of Class 2C,

I received your letter. Thank you very much.

I think it's very wrong to have separate classes for foreign and Swiss children in Rorschach and Lucerne.

The Federal Council (our government) has already written that this is illegal, in response to a question from a member of the Swiss parliament.

I've included the text along with the questions and answers.

With my best regards,

The representative of the Swiss ambassador,

B.L.

Questions and answers

Question:

1. *Is it constitutional?*
2. *Does it respect the agreement on the child's right not to be discriminated against?*
3. *Does it respect education for a 'free society, with understanding, peace, tolerance and friendship among peoples and ethnic groups'?*
4. *Isn't there an international agreement that establishes that education is not subject to discrimination based on language, religion, origin, etc.?*

[...]

Response

The Council does not agree with separate classrooms for foreign children. It thinks it might be helpful to organize language classes for a while so that children who don't know the language well can learn it better.

1. *The school cannot be closed to anyone.*
2. *Creating separate classrooms is illegal.*
3. *It does not respect the agreement regarding the rights of the child.*
4. *The Council believes that creating separate rooms does not facilitate tolerance.*
5. *There is this agreement, and creating separate rooms does not respect this agreement.*

[...]

This overview led us to discuss at length the concepts of legal, illegal, tolerance and intolerance, and nationality, starting with a simple comparison for better understanding:

Luis: Legal is for those who have papers.

Guida: Legal means good (does she refers to the word *Legal* in

Brazilian Portuguese?)

Cláudia: There are nice people who are bad too:

P: Sometimes, it's not easy to get papers.

Isaiah: Really? The bad guys don't have papers?

P: Sometimes, whether someone can obtain papers depends on the laws of the country. Since there are differences in school organisation, there may be other differences. Therefore, it might be easier to go and work in one country than in another.

Edmar: The City Council is which never responds[43].

Cláudia: It's better to write to Switzerland than to the City Council.

When, a few weeks later, SIC (Portuguese television channel) showed the reintegration of a child into a school from which it had been removed, my students were convinced it was because of their letter. Switzerland was once again the center of attention. And there were a few more students who realised that in Oeiras *"nobody cares about us".*
Over the next two years we continued to correspond with the representative about new problems that arose — in Portugal this time — sending him some of our achievements.

December – April: The Portela road

At the beginning of December, we read together the letters that the politicians sent us in response to our questions.

P: The Left Bloc's letter states that if something is wrong at school and we try to change it, that's already doing politics.

Bernardo: So children are politicians too?

---

[43] See next.

P: I think so.

Cláudia: When we hold our Council, we are engaging in politics.

Luis: Yes. This is politics.

P: So what's wrong inside or around school?

Various: The road, the road.

P: What about the road?

Jessica: The curve.

Aida: In Portela direction, there is no sidewalk for the pedestrians.

Eu: We could conduct a survey, like the girls in the Barbie project did for toys, to find out who walks along the road to and from school and how many cars pass by.

Mafalda: And then Pascal?

Eu: Yes, and then what?

Edmar: Then we can send a letter to the politicians to see if they can help us.

We began by conducting a survey in the school's classes. To do this, we prepared a letter that our class will take to all other classes during our plan work. It looks like this:

> *Hello. We are conducting a survey to try and convince the politicians at the Oeiras City Hall to better protect pedestrians on Estrada da Portela. We appreciate your collaboration.*
>
> *Room No.:*
>
> *Students who come and go from Portela*

Child/Hours	8:00	8:30	9:00	12:15	12:45	13:15	15:00	18:00	Other
6 years									
7 years									
8 years									

9 years									
10 years									
over 10									

Students who come and go from Outurela

Child/Hours	8:00	8:30	9:00	12:15	12:45	13:15	15:00	18:00	Other
6 years									
7 years									
8 years									
9 years									
10 years									
over 10									

The children run all over the school collecting the data. After a few days, we are able to compile the results, after complicated calculations, always with Santa Claus watching over us. We take care of the data for Portela.

The count for Outurela is handled by the other 2nd-year class, and we appreciate receiving the results, in a similar format as us for the Portela direction, in the last week of December.

Number of students who walk to and from Portela

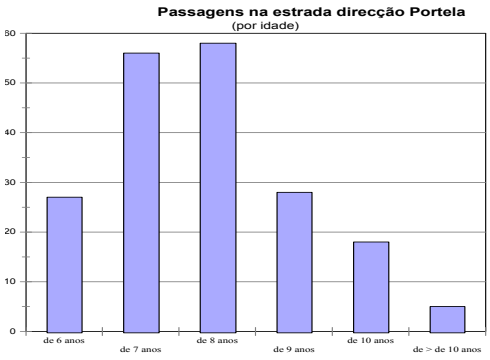
Child/Hours	8:00	8:30	9:00	12:15	12:45	13:15	15:00	18:00	**Total**
6 years			14	3		1	9		**27**
7 years		1	18	10		10	17		**56**
8 years		8	19	2		10	19		**58**
9 years			1	1		13	1	12	**28**
10 years						12		6	**18**

over 10						3		2	**5**
TOTAL	**0**	**9**	**52**	**16**	**0**	**49**	**46**	**20**	**192**

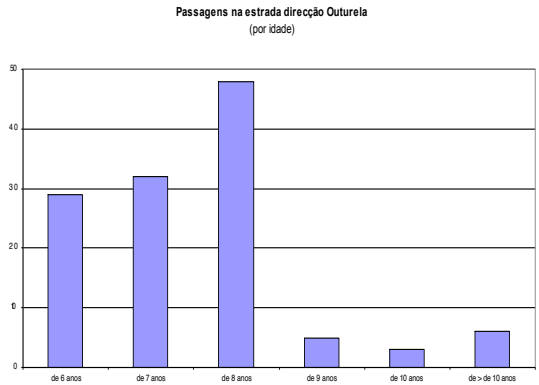
Table 4: Counting made by our group

We're stuck in the middle of the countdown. Commercial Santa Claus is becoming unbearable and is systematically distracting the children from their work, involving them in parties, little parties, games, and activities. The children are caught up in the consumer frenzy, and the excitement generates even more conflict than usual. Because of all this, I've decided to continue the work only after the term break.

At the beginning of January we have time to analyse the data, which I present in two graphs, compiled from the counts taken:



Portela direction (by age)



Outurela direction (by age)

These graphs initiate the following conversation:

P: What's your impression? Are there more children going to Portela or Outurela?

Guide: More towards Portela.

Eu: Why?

Cláudia: Because there are more children.

Bernardo: Because there are more stakes.

P: What is the age of most children going to Portela?

I walk around the room and check that they were able to read the graph and identify the age group (8 years) in question.

Eu: And what is the least frequent age?

Sátia: 10 years

Mafalda: No, more than 10 years.

Eu: Which group has the biggest difference between those from Portela and those from Outurela?

Luis: The 9-year-olds.

Eu: How many 8-year-old children go to Portela?

I make another round of the room. Opinions are divided.

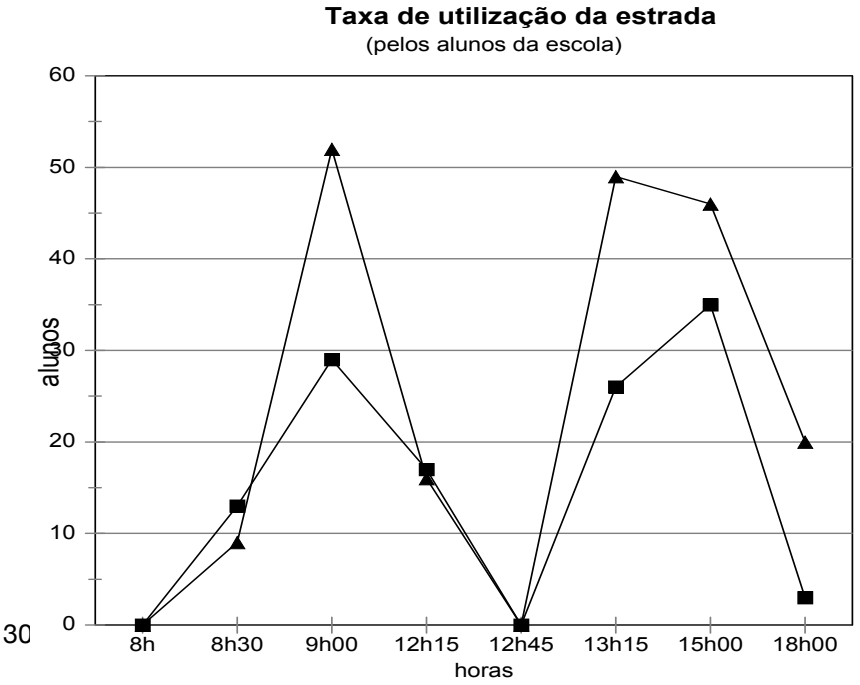
Many suggest 11.

I'm pointing to the vertical axis.

Now the answers vary: 11, 55, 56, 60.

Sátia proposes "between 55 and 60 students".

I present another graph:



Frequency of use by children of the school (by hours)

Aida immediately says: the triangle is Portela, the rectangle is Outurela.
I ask what time most children go to school: the conclusion is unanimous, except for Edmar: at nine.
Edmar thinks that at 9 am and 3 pm it should be more or less the same. It takes him a while to realise that at 3 pm the students leave school, they don't go to school.
But it becomes clear which are the three times with the most students on the road. We agreed to count cars the next day, at these times: 8:45-9:00, 13:00-13:15 and 14:45-15:00.
We prepared a tally sheet for the students to record their fares.
Wednesday, January 19th, at the entrance we counted cars for a quarter of an hour, accompanied by the attention of the police officer working with the *Safe School Program.*
We started the afternoon's work with another fifteen minutes of counting cars, which slightly destabilised the entry of students on the double shift schedule.
At the end of the day, we counted again, and now it was some employees from one of the after-school programs who were surprised. They came to ask what we were doing, and took the opportunity to remind me that I hadn't sent homework yet, and that's why they didn't know what to do with the students...
I prepare the attendance table on the computer with two students (*See Table 5*) to generate some more graphs later.
We show everything to others and ask for feedback. The children do not have much difficulty reading the frequency table: many read aloud the values corresponding to the various times and directions.

Direction Portela	*15 m*	*P/m*	*Dir. Outurela*	*15 m*	*P/m*	*Portela Road*	*15 m*	*P/m*
08:45 — 09:00								
Cars and vans	75	5,0	Cars and vans	49	3,2	Cars and vans	124	8,3
Busses	1	0,1	Busses	10	0,6	Busses	11	0,7
Trucks	3	0,2	Trucks	12	0,8	Trucks	14	0,9
Motocycles	3	0,2	Motocycles	0	0,0	Motocycles	3	0,2
total	***82***	***5,5***	***total***	***70***	***4,6***	***total***	***152***	***10,1***
13:00 — 13:15								
Cars and vans	45	3,0	Cars and vans	47	3,2	Cars and vans	91	6,1
Busses	4	0,2	Busses	14	1,0	Busses	18	1,2
Trucks	5	0,3	Trucks	2	0,1	Trucks	7	0,5
Motocycles	0	0,0	Motocycles	0	0,0	Motocycles	0	0,0
total	***53***	***3,5***	***total***	***63***	***4,2***	***total***	***116***	***7,7***
14:45 — 15:00								
Cars and vans	42	2,8	Cars and vans	45	3,0	Cars and vans	87	5,8
Busses	3	0,2	Busses	3	0,2	Busses	6	0,4
Trucks	3	0,2	Trucks	8	0,5	Trucks	11	0,7
Motocycles	0	0,0	Motocycles	1	0,1	Motocycles	1	0,1
total	***49***	***3,3***	***total***	***56***	***3,7***	***total***	***105***	***7,0***

Table 5: Counting Results of transit frequency at Portela Road, 19.01. 2000

Upon closer analysis, it quickly becomes clear:

Guide: What passes by most are cars.

Cláudia: Sometimes there are more trucks than buses, sometimes it's the other way around.

Luis: In the morning there are more cars from Portela.

Bernardo: We counted a lot of cars!
My mother was coming in a van and saw me in the street.

Adilson: Sometimes two cars would come at the same time.

P: In the morning there are 10 cars, or rather, 10 vehicles per

minute. If it takes them 5 minutes to get down the road, children pass many cars.

Guide: Wow! That's a lot!

P: So how many in fact?

A great silence.

Then Guida, Luís and Jessica, more or less at the same time: 50!

Luis: There are fewer in the afternoon.

P: Yes, in the afternoon it's about 35 cars, but it takes children still 5 minutes on the road.

Do you remember why we started all this?

Guida (through gritted teeth): Because of the politicians.

P: Yes, because of something they said.

Bernardo: That we are all political beings.

P: Exactly. And then we point to the road as something that's wrong with our school. And now what?

Everyone is looking at me.

P: So, what are we going to do now?

Cláudia: Go get my cake. (It's her birthday today.)

P: That's will be soon. Before that, what are we going to do with all this work?

Edmar:To write.

P: To whom?

Edmar and Luís: To the president.

P: Yes, but this time to the Town mayor.

We returned to the subject on January 27th; the work hardly began because Indira insulted the police officer outside the school, causing a dispute between them that continues in the hallway.

We are reminded once again why we do this work.

Edmar: The road is dangerous.

Jessica: It was because of the curve.

Cláudia: And about the cars.

P: But why did we start?

Luis: To write to the president...

P: ...of the township, yes. But how did we start? Who gave us the idea?

Aida: Ah! From the politicians' letter.

P: Exactly! What did they say that even Bernardo was very surprised by?

Luis: All of us are politicians.

P: Don't you remember, Bernardo, that you asked: us too? And what did we discover?

Cláudia: That in the morning there are 55 children who come from Portela.

Soraia: There are many cars.

Jessica: We encounter 50 cars along the way.

P: Well. There are 10 cars per minute in the morning. In the afternoon there are 7. In five minutes, how many cars do we cross?

Jessica: So that's it: 50 cars!

Cláudia: But there are fewer in the afternoon.

We'll leave the discussion at that point; the children from the other class can take care of giving suggestions. Then we'll put the elements together.

Finally, I propose the following letter to both classes, to which we have attached the graphs we made with brief comments.

Our part is done. We sent the letter signed by both classes involved.

Will we get a response?

Oeiras City Council
Departments of Education and Public Work
Marquês de Pombal Square
2780 Oeiras

Carnaxide, February 4, 2000

Hello,

Some time ago – during the elections – some politicians told us that trying to change something that is wrong is doing politics, and that therefore everyone is a politician, even children.

That's why we did a study on the road in front of our school. It is a very dangerous road, and we want to ask the council members to provide us with more safety measures.

We discovered that 315 children from our school come every day via the Portela or Outurela road.

We found that on the day we counted the vehicles, 10 vehicles passed per minute in the morning and 7 per minute in the afternoon.

We discovered that someone who takes 5 minutes to get to school by road crosses paths with 50 cars!

The most dangerous part is that curve in the road, which doesn't even have a sidewalk. Cars often come at very high speeds. We couldn't measure this ourselves, but believe us, it's true!

We've already considered what could be done: providing sidewalks (there aren't any along much of the road), widening the road, installing traffic lights, installing speed bumps, and putting up more traffic signs.

We added to our chart the graphs that the computer generated

from our calculations.
We await your response!
A little kiss from all of us.

No response...

The April issue of the Urban newspaper, No. 11, arrives at the school after the Easter holidays. In addition to a very nice editorial by the Mayor about the changes taking place in Outurela, there is an A4 page entitled *News from the EB 1 Outurela – Portela school,* focusing on the school activity plan, with images from a joint exhibition in the school library.
I show it to the students, who aren't very interested. Only Luís says they haven't responded from the City Hall in ages. On May 22nd, we decided to write a second letter:

Hello,
Since the beginning of the year, we have written 13 letters concerning of our work at school and in the classroom.
(we include the list)
Why didn't you respond to our letter with our proposals? Did you find some kind of a problem?
We are sending you a copy of our first letter to remind you of our work.
Is there the intention to put speed bumps or signs on the curve in the road? And to put in sidewalks?
A little kiss from everyone.

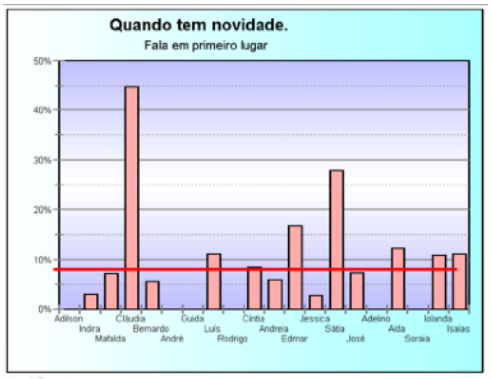
We attached the first letter and I sent a copy to the Urban Office, along with a letter from me.
The City Council continue not responding to the children. A letter

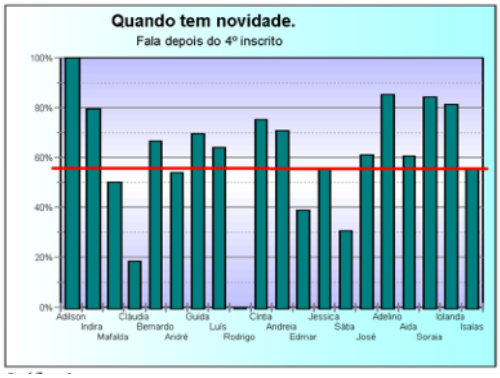
arrived from the Urban Office, informing us that we sent the letter to the wrong place and that it will be forwarded.
When I show this text to my students, I notice a great indifference. Cláudia even says: "Oh Pascal, they don't care!".
In December 2000, when we were already in the third grade, we still had no answer. We took advantage of the visit of *Santa Claus* in the person of the mayor, to deliver one more copy to *Santa Claus* with the request to '*please deliver this letter to the Mayor*'.
In January 2001, there were roadworks in front of the school corresponding to our request, but we never received a written response...

A summary...

Here follow some excerpts from our year-end evaluation, completed on June 26th.

News – Tell, read and show.





Who speaks in 1st place

Who speaks after the 4th speaker

Cláudia: It's to say important things.
Guide: It was good to have a moment when everyone could speak.

Aida: There were some very funny items.
Jessica: It's important to talk about the things you have to say.
Iolanda: It's even good for typing on the computer.
We analyse the "When there's something to tell..." charts I made about who speaks first.
In general, the children thought that Cláudia, Sátia, André, Luís, and Aida were the ones who spoke most often at the beginning of *Read, tell and show* (when attention is best). They are amazed when seeing the number of times Cláudia speaks first. She tries to say it's not true, but ends up giving in to the evidence. When I ask if they think we should continue with *Read, tell and show* next year, Luís suggests replacing it with a reading or doing-things session. There will be a mixed solution that will vary over the next two years.

Projects

Cláudia: I really liked the washing machine project, the computer, and the Barbies.
Mafalda: I really enjoyed going to Aida's Café and using the computer.
Andreia: I really liked the Easter project.
Fourteen students think they are much more capable of working on a project without the constant support of an adult than at the beginning of the year, two think not (Adelino and Indira), two do not pronounce themselves (Iolanda and Rodrigo), Sátia and Soraia are not present.
Large projects appear in the following order of preference: Portela Road (13), Switzerland (11), Neighbourhood (10), Politicians (6).
Everyone thinks it's important that we continue to work on projects.

Texts

Guide: It's fun to read what we write.
Mafalda: It's important, because of correcting the texts.
Aida: Some already read very well.
Luis: Reading the texts is more fun than *Read, tell and show*
Cláudia: What's fun is writing and then reading.
Everyone agrees to continue having time for reading aloud.

Problems

Jessica: The problems were difficult. Sometimes we didn't know where to find things, and Pascal had to help.
Luis: Sometimes I don't understand it at first.
Soraia: For some problems, Pascal had to explain many times. The Football-one was the easiest.
Aida: But there were also other easy problems.
When we start to recall problems, and the following come up: the ball, the problems of correspondence, Easter, coins, measurements, weights, drawing up the floor plan.

The exercise cards

Fourteen students say they already understand how the series of exercise cards work. Indira and Isaías don't understand it very well, and Iolanda and Cintia didn't vote. They consider the mathematic cards to be more complicated.
Aida: The math problems, some are quite difficult.
José: Language-related ones are more difficult.
Cláudia: I liked the reading cards.

Everyone wants to continue the work exercise cards.

Workshops

All the workshops were great, and all of them should continue. In the language workshop, in order of preference, the computer, reading, the library, and writing come first. In the math workshop, learners put the geoboard first, followed by files, Loco, and tangram. Everyone enjoyed the drawing workshops and the painting corner.

The class newspaper

Iolanda: It was good, we made money.
Aida: It's funny to give to people.
We agree to continue publishing.

The Council

Luis: We can talk about our things.
Mafalda: We can discuss our problems.
Andreia: I think it's important to discuss.
Everyone agrees that we will continue the Council.

I am transcribing pages 15 and 16 of Journal No. 8:
The things I enjoyed most this year were...
1. The painting corner, the computer, and the index cards. *Louis*.
2. The school, the classroom, and Pascal. *José*.
3. Correspondence, the Pokémon project, writing workshops. *Sátia*.
4. The Pokémon project, the texts, the Pikachu design. *Mafalda*.
5. Read, tell and show, free afternoons and projects. *Guida*.

6. The newspaper, the math workshop, the language workshop. *Cynthia*.
7. The texts, the correspondence, and the projects. *Cláudia*.
8. Correspondence, projects, and the computer. *Aida*.
9. Readings, drawing, and language worksheets. *André*.
10. You, teacher and interns, and the painting. *Adelino*.
11. The library, reading, and painting. *Andreia*.
12. The interns and when Pascal bought books. *Jessica*.
13. I enjoyed writing on the computer, going to the library, and going to Portela [neighbourhood project]. *Bernardo*.
14. The computer, painting, and projects. *Edmar*.
15. The texts and the fact sheets. *Rodrigo*.
16. Friends. *Indira*.

The story, which we invented based on Pokémon, was another way for us to remember some of the interventions that we consider most significant.

That day, Adilson, Sandro, and Soraia weren't at school; Iolanda was angry with Isaías, who was angry with Iolanda, so the two refused to participate in the evaluation.

More reflections from an educator – trainer.

This chapter functions as a "close-up."
It focuses on 10 months in a 29-year professional trajectory. The Outurela and Portela class group accentuated existing concerns of mine, thus allowing me to learn more. Some comments.

The class group is an artificial group. These children, like all the others who attend school, found themselves in this school in that class because some teachers decided so. All the problems that arise from it must necessarily be resolved within that space with all its members.

When the prevailing culture teaches that conflicts are resolved through violence, that hierarchies are defined as wolves define them in their pack, it becomes risky to force dialogue without giving it the necessary space and time to develop. "*First the slap in the face, then we'll talk, Pascal.*"

It is no coincidence that I am reminding Fernand Oury's observation: "*Don't forget that in some occasions a slap in the face works like psychotherapy for the poor".* But amidst so much aggression, even psychotherapy gets lost... It took me six months to make the Councils acceptable spaces for discussion. And there were still relapses, regularly.

At the beginning of the year, nobody wanted to be responsible for anything; it was too much work. Setting an example, valuing a product made by someone, immediately made them say, "*If that's the case, then I won't do any more of this".* So many revolts, so many refusals.

The focus on free-form writing and *Read, tell and show* served primarily to build confidence and create space. But it also helped me gradually to understand a reality I was completely unaware of. Here, everything was told to me in the first person.

And since I was involved, I also needed to introduce my own news

into *Read, tell and show*: organisational ideas first, but also experiences coming from another outside world, one that was as unknown to them as theirs was to me: the politicians, the theater, writing to exchange information, the books, and later the museums, symphonic music, the reasons for exploitation and slavery of which they only knew one side.

The protest at the Swiss embassy was a game-changer. The letter, the response, being taken seriously by someone they consider important, gave strength to many other situations of protest or requests for clarification. They were sensitive to the fact that, in that year, local power was more distant than the power of another country.

In our correspondence, inter-school exchanges occupied less and less space, being replaced by even more real correspondence. And this correspondence carried research, in the year described here, but even more so in the following two years, because the story didn't end there. It would continue until the children left the 4th grade and the teacher.

Applying the thin veneer we call civilization and citizenship is very costly. Dealing with it, each time it cracks, is even more difficult. And the environment doesn't help much. Many of those national elected representatives didn't either, in that specific 1999-2000 school year, when they decided to present their own children a Christmas party with a concert by a run-of-the-mill boy band, using for that purpose one of what was once called an exemplary space for dialogue at the national level: the Senate of the Assembly of the Republic. Or perhaps I misunderstand the word citizenship?

Regarding isomorphism

I began to write this part of my pedagogical adventures when, after working with adults for several years, I returned to working with children, mirroring in them the work I had done with adults and previously with other children in other contexts.

I acknowledged their full right to speak right from the start, which sometimes complicated things.

Furthermore, there was noteworthy opposition: the children forced me to respond more firmly, to remind them, as I did the adult trainees, of the need to comply with rules external to the group, such as the schedule[44].

There are rules that are stated and explained and are non-negotiable. Being a coach in an adult group involves remembering them. But, being an adult in a child group means having added civil responsibility for those children.

However, the approach to working with children reveals similarities to working with adult professionals, who have to show, communicate, or sell the product of their work to third parties. Thus, it refers not only to newspaper sales but also to the confusions that have to be clarified, the budget that has to be studied, as well as the overall class budget, to allow for the management of space and time.

The established moments (Council, *Read, tell and show*, project presentation) guarantee group discussion about everything that interests the group, for internal and external reasons.

[44] In *in context training* for teachers, for example...

The news moment, rapidly transformed in *Read, tell and show* segment, allowing the presentation of short news items, has the same effect as daily conversations between adults when they arrive at work. Establishing it as a formal moment, however, allows the information to be used as a basis for school learning, among other things.

The Council, based on ideas developed by practitioners of the Freinet movements and perfected by institutional pedagogy workers, allows for the complete management of space and time, which is defined for work with both children and adults.

Projects, their development, execution, and presentation, within the classroom context, are a powerful way for children to take ownership of the world while becoming competent in what the national curriculum dictates.

They also serve to give meaning and significance (Paulo Freire) to words.

From oral communication, the process moves to writing, for example with letters to politicians, the Swiss embassy, the City Hall, starting with a simple *Hey* or *Hello*. Writing skills are developed with and by the children in a real-life context.

The aim is to engage children, thinking individuals, who are learning to read and write, avoiding "*Literacy courses [...] were approached from a schooling perspective, in the strictest sense, and not from an educational one. In these courses, literacy was seen as an end in itself; that is, what mattered was reading the word, not reading the world, using Paulo Freire's words.*"[45] There is no doubt that the proposals,

[45] Cavaco, Carmen (2002: 98).

developed by and with the children, allow, here indeed, this interpretation of the world.

In the initial contact, it becomes clear how the proper students consider themselves dependent and are reminiscent to excessive welfarism. Throughout the year, I will gradually reduce this need for dependence provoking assistance, proposing a "*A pedagogy that never separates technical training, indispensable to professional development, from an understanding of how and why society operates in this or that way.*"[46].

The formal formation of the class is, in this journey, a milestone of something built together. The pedagogical triangle in which the learners, trainer, and trainees — and in this case, teacher and pupils — work together towards a common goal is present not only in the topics covered but also in the very construction of the space-time that is the class.

It is in February that the evolution becomes clearly noticeable.

Not everything has been achieved; difficulties persist. But as time goes on, the group becomes increasingly well-organised, and the children gain the capacity for organisational leadership.

In March, twenty seven-year-old children organise themselves around seven projects.

The *Read, tell and show* moments are led by children, and the work is presented to parents. The children exhibit the product of their work, just as adults do in a training context using active learning methods.

When creating rules, the group starts by being very punitive. Here,

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[46] Freire, Paulo (2002: 119).

they reproduce a scheme well known to adults — and imitated by children —which consists of considering that rules are meant to be broken, and that whoever is caught is unlucky and will be fined.

The children develop and explore small sets of organisational experiences, guided by the educator[47].

In January, discussions focus on responsibilities, which at the beginning of the year nobody wanted.

In March, discussions lead to problem-solving with enough calm to manage all the steps.

After the Easter term break, the Council is definitively established as the work regulator. The rules continue to be broken from time to time, but fines are only one option, appropriate at times, although discussion and consensus are valued more.

The fact is that the desire to learn is being rediscovered, just as it is

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[47] And learning is not just for children. *"The learning of students has to do with the teaching of teachers, with their seriousness, their scientific competence, their loving-kindness, their humor, their political clarity, their coherence, just as all these qualities have to do with the more or less fair or decent way in which they are respected or not. For all this, we paid great attention, on the one hand, to the ongoing training of educators; on the other, to the training of mothers and fathers"* (Paulo Freire (2002: 126) in the 'Clubes Sesianos' at the Social Service of Industry).

with adults[48].

Amidst all this construction, children, perhaps more than adults, question and are questioned about the purpose of power. The entire organisation of work reminds us that "*Regardless of the educational setting — whether primary, secondary, or university, vocational, or informal popular education — educators, including progressive educators, have no other path than coherence between their democratic discourse and their equally democratic practice*"[49].

The formative learning context for trainees and trainers.

Person-centred learning

Contrary to what has been known for over half a century, through the work of Vygotsky and subsequent research by Piaget, many adults insist on considering children as having no history prior to school or, sometimes simultaneously, as miniature, pre-formatted adults.

It is true that illiterate children, like illiterate adults, use oral language to construct knowledge and to formulate working or problem-solving hypotheses. However, they use a vocabulary that is

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[48] Meignant (1999: 152) notes: "*Is it necessary to emphasise that it is when need and desire meet that the conditions for success are best met? This is one of the challenges of cooperation between those responsible for training and other actors: its effectiveness will only be achieved because the network of functional and hierarchical actors will have sensitised the environment to the evolution of professions and the context, will have encouraged employees to develop their skills, will have given them the desire to train and the indications to guide that desire in a positive way.*"

[49] Freire, Paulo (2002: 226).

familiar to them, usually smaller than that of an adult, and above all, they use a different kind of imagination, not as standardised by life experience[50].

The work described here starts with children who have some difficulty positioning themselves and an adult who is not yet fully aware of them.

It wasn't always clear to me when family and environment confer upon them the status of children and when the status of miniature adults. It's noticeable that some families consider girls old enough to take on adult tasks. Jessica, for example, is responsible for the newborn baby, so she doesn't appear in the room when she has to be with him, except to get milk or help with mealtimes[51]. Sátia, who lives with her father and siblings and frequently changes 'aunts', has to organise herself to help her father with household chores, as she is the only permanent 'woman' in the household. I observe that boys, miniature men, and therefore considered entitled to leisure, are less involved, only taking care of some 'heavyweight' tasks, such as picking up groceries bought by their mother or a younger sister. They are certainly children with life experiences where adult life intervenes, and therefore possess a certain practical and pragmatic knowledge, even if this doesn't make them adults. But all are very

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[50] There are many authors who write about this. Among them, Oliverio (1986) in a more critical way, but also Jacquard (1991a), or even Guzmán (1990).

[51] Two years later, when we are away from home, at the correspondents' school in Leuven, I help Jessica make the daily phone call home. My passive knowledge of Creole reveals yet another facet to me: she, the second to last of four sisters, organises the house, the shopping, and the messages for her mother's clients, a street fish vendor. At the time, she is 10 years old.

sensitive to infantilisation.

Their pragmatism also taught them early on that, in the school context, the group only serves as protection for the individual. Thus, it is a great novelty to feel that group work itself is not for individual benefit but for the benefit of the group itself. It requires the establishment of democratic order and not absolute individual freedom and, of course, the first reactions are of revolt.

Given the need to establish an acceptable work environment, November is the month for the introduction of pragmatic colour-coded belts, inherited from institutional pedagogy.

The atmosphere within the group necessitated clear clashes. In fact, there are some situations in the class where simply moving around proves dangerous. And functional rules seem to have some success when understood as useful, but not when identified, even unfairly, as "moralising."

Starting in January, more personal concerns arise, although still related to work. We progress little by little: only two years later does the group realise that it can work without the constant presence of an adult in each work group, organising external contacts for a large-scale project that we will be developing: planning, executing, and documenting the visit to Belgian correspondents.

The relationship with the strong leaders, Cláudia and Sátia, with the leader Luís, and with the "anti-leaders" José and Indira gradually clarifies the various roles of the group's educator. Among all the references I make to the children, 10% are to Cláudia, 8% to Luís, and 8% to Sátia. The anti-leaders José and Indira appear with a frequency of 7% and 6.7%, respectively. The others are cited on average with 3% of the total. That is, 5 children out of 20 represent

40% of the personalised observations.
The adult-child relationship, combined with the teacher-student relationship and also with the relationship of each member of the group with the rest of the group, within the Council, gives rise to this personalisation.
It would be an illusion to think that a teacher or trainer can use the power formally granted to them to, in a sudden burst of inspiration, cease exercising it. However, it is this power that allows them to choose how they organize their work with trainees or students. But it is important to be clear about the limits of the group's autonomy and its management.
It is gradually becoming clear, thanks to José, that the Council does not control space and time outside the classroom, and therefore will have to delegate power to the civil representative, the teacher.
More students will begin to understand how power works when we analyse the letter from the Swiss embassy, making it clear that the Council does not decide everything and that there are higher laws.
Moreover, the Council's jurisdiction is brought into focus again when the class is disgusted because an assistant hit one of the children with an umbrella.
The regulation of work and the group then takes place, something that falls under the competence of the regulatory Council, provided that it accepts the 'external law' of the *Curricular Organisation and Programs*, commonly known as 'the curriculum', equivalent to an external order in business training, or to the validation of skills in adult education.
The wish list for the next school year, based on the assessment and included in the class curriculum project, will demonstrate the full

meaning of the Council, where the guiding principles of the work are discussed, respecting the terms of reference.

An important and recurring aspect is the connection between school learning and the outside world. There is a constant flow of information between the classroom and the immediate and distant environment, which defines the activity itself. Some activities involve the whole class, such as the first trip to the theater. I also recall the guiding thread that is woven, starting with politicians (October), passing through the Portela Road problem (December – April), which will involve the City Council, until the situation with Portuguese immigrants (January – March) which involves the Swiss embassy.

Sometimes the connections are practical and specific, stemming from various news items in *Read, tell and show* that relate to events at home or in the neighbourhood, but also to relationships like when Cláudia transformed ***black*** from José in ***person of colour***. Here is a good illustration of how terms only used by some of the white population in the neighbourhood to be a euphemism which disguise racism are internalised by mixed-race and black children.

We will move forward when skin color is addressed in a study about evolution in the following school year. On the website that the class maintained at the time, other references to work on the concept of racism also appeared[52].

The work goes beyond literacy and conceptualisation. It also

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[52] On a server that although offered free space, was obviously swallowed up by a world that considers information to be paid for, and therefore made this website disappear.

involves the actual construction of objects. The group of the clock project build a sundial that will serve the class for two and a half years. The class goes for investigating the neighbourhood. The children create a script of interviews, contact local merchants, and produce a booklet, which is copied and returned to the merchants themselves[53].

Paulo Freire explains that this pedagogical option is not "*The dominant ideology, deaf to the need for a critical reading of the world, insists on the purely technical training of the working class, through which it reproduces itself as such; it is that of the dominated, or progressive ideology, which does not separate technical training from political training, reading of the world from reading of discourse. The one that unveils and uncovers*."[54].

A statement attributed to Einstein is that the only place where "*success*" comes before "*work*" is in the dictionary. We can complement this idea with a note about the type of work that leads to success.

Several researchers show how the classic Taylorist model, which served as a reference during the mass scaling of schooling[55], continues to prevail in both adult education and children's education. This model justifies teachers acting as specialised workers who mould the raw material – the students – with their knowledge, based on pre-established objectives. Thus, more so with

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[53] And no longer to be seen in www.freewebtown.com\pascalcorner.

[54] Freire, Paulo (2002: 118).

[55] I mention two among many: Alain Meignant (1999) and Manuel Sarmento (2000).

children than with adults, learning is easily confused with the pedagogical illusion based on the repetition of tasks and the memorisation of facts taken out of context[56].

Children who are trained to perform routines without thinking about them become lost when those routines change. They cannot succeed, which raises doubts about the very purpose of the educator's work.

The work and its content, the regulation of space, time, and the group, are the subject of reflection and decision-making in October, as in February or June, discussed in the Council, consciously adapting — which does not mean peacefully — routines to everyone's needs so that they do not lose their usefulness and meaning.

Anxieties, joys, and strategies

It is not difficult to find, in the description of the work and the building of the relationship with the children, statements that illustrate my anxieties that reappear periodically throughout the year. The changes in strategy, on the other hand, are concentrated

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[56] In this regard, Manuel Sarmento (2000: 114) states: "*The school survived not only despite the pedagogues, but against the pedagogues.*" The author mentions Dewey, Freinet, Kohlberg, Makarenko, Sergio, Lobrot, Decroly, and Rogers, to whom I would like to add Freire and Oury. Sarmento continues: "*all the pedagogical proposals that fostered the construction of an alternative school model, more faithful to the idea of the integral formation of the human being that is the child or adolescent, in the individual, relational, and civic dimensions, have been reduced to [...] minority currents that barely survive in State schools.*"

in the first two periods, while the joys accompany the anxieties and the changes they provoke, almost as if to counterbalance them.
The anxieties relate to three essential factors: the failure to follow rules, the restless and anxious teacher, and the constant fights between the pupils themselves.
The very object of anxiety changes throughout the year: while initially the statements refer to the children themselves, from the end of November onwards the attention gradually shifts more towards the work. It is as if, as the cultures of each child and the teacher meet, he becomes more available to see the essential: the work together. This becomes even clearer with the concern for the children to take ownership of their citizenship, present in *Read, tell and show,* in the Council, and in the support for the projects that the they develop.
Some of the first expressions of joy are «*to reassure the teacher*».
Notes appear, seemingly to convince the educator himself how good it is that the pupils showed interest in the Council. Even though joy is expressed, the choice of certain words reveals a certain lack of confidence.
Changes in strategy have very varied reasons. They may involve changes in routine, while others have to do with how the usefulness of an activity is perceived.
The sometimes differing views that pupils, their families, and I myself have of the school also influence some of the changes.
This proves extremely complicated in some situations. It is worth remembering that "*It's one thing to move a table from one place in the house to another. You just need the physical strength to do it. It's quite another to change a cultural habit. To convince Brazilians, for example,*

that soy-based feijoada is delicious."[57].

Learning to develop rules cooperatively is a matter of infrastructure and conceptualisation of that infrastructure. It's not easy, and sometimes we fall back on using old expressions that recall previous, less elaborate organisational concepts.

Some situations bring to mind or question situations I have experienced previously with other people, reflections made with or by Fernand Oury and other colleagues, or within the MEM, allowing progress in conducting the action, with small steps and big setbacks.

Establishing Relationships

I sought to highlight that when relationships are established between a group of children whose experiences differ from those of the teacher as a child, there is a strong possibility that the adult will learn a great deal. I have already focused on how both the children and the adults who accompany them have difficulty seeing school in a different way.

Here, the teacher in charge of the class was, from the outset, at an advantage: he already conceived of the school in a different way, while his interlocutors had a vision that corresponded to the austere models that surrounded them. This meant that the teaching-learning process included a proposal for migration towards the appropriation of a humanising school concept, which proved to be difficult.

There are many learning opportunities.

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[57] Freire, Paulo (2002: 225).

Adults appropriate the language and linguistic patterns used by children, as well as the contexts they present. It is primarily through the stories they tell, the projects they choose, and the reality they bring to life, that the teacher's eco-formation[58] becomes apparent.

Regarding the stifling school system, which he condemns, many children have a perspective imported from the adult world, not unlike what Paulo Freire[59] refers to when speaking about the reaction of a sponsor to religious educators in a Swiss project in the 1970s: "*If these young people freely discuss issues of sex today, what will they do tomorrow when faced with issues of social justice? I want docile workers, not restless and inquisitive ones.* Deep down, they think that school only serves to tame them.

Thus, drawing from a set of past experiences and unreflective ideas, they provoke continuous reflection on the part of the educator. They speak of other concepts of family, have other ways of expressing anger and reconciliation, have complicated relationships, even within the neighbourhood, express their opinions on 'gangs' and protectionism, models that are important to the classroom.

At the same time, they are supported in learning to structure routines, something that the school, as an institution, often fails to do. Since I don't just instil these routines, but encourage participation, there's a period where free activity mixes with disorder. Oury used to say that this phase was inevitable, but it was the first time in my professional career that I felt it so strongly.

Of course, what is interesting is the gradual appropriation that the

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[58] Canário, Rui (2000).

[59] Freire, Paulo (2002: 117).

children make of the proposed management model, which implies learning to analyse complicated situations together. They learn that working with information is a complex task[60].

The relationship that is built with parents, on the other hand, confirms that we have a very different view of school, even though we, as adults, share the same concern for the success of children in their school learning and as individuals.

Guiding adults towards this alternative conceptualisation of school strengthens the alliance for children's social success. This necessarily involves investing in these same parents so that they can embrace this school in a meaningful way and experience this classroom as a democratic process of development[61].

This testimony from another meeting with other parents comes to mind: "*The second difficulty, [...] the demand that their children learn from the ABC Charter, led to a long debate. [...] The demand that cost us several students began to lose strength when, one day, at a parents' meeting, I suddenly asked: 'Who here has ever seen a child who starts talking by saying M, F, B, S?' Nobody, was the answer that silence*

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[60] Or, as Paulo Freire (2002: 136) says, "*Information is communicative, or generates communication, when the one to whom something is being informed grasps the substantiveness of the content being informed, when the one who receives the information goes beyond the act of receiving and, recreating the reception, transforms it into the production of knowledge of the communication, thus becoming also a subject of the information process that therefore becomes formation.*"

[61] What appears to be a crime, if we understand well some researchers who work on territoriality. Well... (see comment on the article by Santos and Paulus, (2004) published in *Education, Society and Cultures no. 20*).

brought us. Nobody, in fact, has ever started talking by saying letters. When a baby says: 'Mommy', he means: 'Mommy, I'm hungry, I'm wet, I'm…'…"[62].

In short, this first year of work at the Outurela and Portela school allowed me to learn how to position myself among the children and adults, in their midst, to motivate them and help them break free from their dependence, the trap of well-intentioned behaviour, and school isolation.

Between school, children and teachers – part 3

The fruits of labour in the following two years.

After a year of development, the regulatory routines were working: creating a weekly calendar, reading the class diary at the weekly meeting, ensuring direct democracy. Through this meeting, the most important component of the Class Council, the group then truly managed the space, time, and actions of the class. This management, carried out by the learners and controlled by the council, included the management of money for books and consumable materials, as well as other resources such as calculators, geoboards, etc.

The installation of the Council proved difficult and time-consuming. Observations already mentioned, such as: "Oh! Pascal, I write in my diary, but I'll beat him anyway!", putting the saying into practice immediately, reminded me of the statement "*One who deliberates on one's culture is already cultivated, and the questions of one who believe*

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[62] Words by Paulo Freire (2002: 130).

is questioning the principles of one's education still have one's education as a principle"[63] is open to various interpretations... It was only much later that children began to see violence in a different light.

Communication circuits

From my very first year on the job, I highly valued moments that facilitated communication, in its various forms, and always with the aim of making things easier to explain.

The *Read, tell and show* moment had very important consequences. It was in this space that people talked about uncles and cousins who were imprisoned for robbery, or for having the wrong skin colour in the wrong place. Here, they talked about events in the neighbourhood and in the family.

What was recounted and shown became study material, as the pupils realised that the teacher did not present himself as a vigilante, moralist, or therapist and that, to paraphrase Ivan Illich, he knew he had no right to interfere in the private affairs of his clients, preaching sermons to an audience over which he had legitimate power.

The *Read, tell and show* moment gave rise to many research opportunities. To find out who has a washing machine at home, who has a bedside lamp, who has a cell phone, but also to understand what racism means, what the roots of each person are, and why in Cape Verde, in addition to Creole, Portuguese is also spoken, or what the difference is between a clone and a twin.

Central to all the work was the need to publish, to be heard, to be

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[63] Bourdieu, Pierre e Passaron, Jean-Claude (1970: 61)

read. Little by little, through a class newspaper, initially composed only of free texts written by the students, and later with news of the class's interventions with the school, the community, or more distant audiences, the children began to exist in history. When the children realised that the written word allowed communication with others, living in some cases realities very different from their own, publication became an obsession: in addition to the newspaper we published monthly, the class maintained correspondence, by conventional letter and email, with many interlocutors, published special newspapers, wrote and acted in two plays, and, in the middle of the second year of work, launched its website[64].

The management of this publishing circuit, intertwined with the entire life of the class, always remained the responsibility of the group, through its Council which also managed all the rest of the work. Every year, a plan and a budget were drawn up, controlled in the weekly Councils; the condition was to get the machine working, in a cultural space, a space for experimentation and transfer, a common and sociable space. A class from compulsory State school is as good a starting point as any other group.

Three months back in time with the women of Afghanistan.

The last three months of the 2000-2001 school year were marked by two master activities, at the end of another year of projects.

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[64] As I mentioned, unfortunately it disappeared when that server allowing free content to be placed on the network disappeared and with it, also the class contents. (2026 note: Perhaps it still exists on a CD-Rom each of them took with them with an of-line copy... in 2002...)

While continuing the preparation of the theatrical adaptation of the book *The Eye of the Wolf* by Daniel Pennac emerged a solidarity project that gained increasing prominence.

The television called upon the children, who were by then accustomed to watching the news, for yet another intervention.

This time, it was some girls in the class who heard, at the end of March, that in a country far away, the Taliban mistreated women. They decided to do a project to learn more about that country.

Some online research led them to pages dedicated to supporting Afghan women, and they decided to help. They wrote a letter to find out what they could do.

Three girls approached me for help preparing a proposal for the Class Council. They wanted to raise money without begging, as they insisted: "No begging, Pascal!"

Thus, a new Special Paper was born in the Council, "*Children's Rights – What we have already done*"[65] in which they collectively wrote the story of two years of life in the class."

We agreed that we would sell the newspaper, as we normally did with the class newspaper. Since some thought we wouldn't make much money that way, we decided to contact classmates and some of the teacher's friends by email, asking for help with the sales. When one of the mothers suggested taking some newspapers to her colleagues at the cleaning company where she works, the

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[65]The Special Paper disappeared along with the server freewebtown.com containing the class website. Some of my writing remained Portuguese article for Escola Moderna 20/5 2004 Uma questão de opção ... curricular [a matter of making curricular choices...]

children immediately thought there might be more mothers available. In fact, four mothers helped sell the newspapers.
Our goal of paying for a year of clandestine schooling in an Afghan village was almost achieved: we managed to fund 8 months of schooling.

The last year

The following school year, the children showed Lisbon to their parents. They taught some family members how to read the information on the maps of the public transport company Carris and the Metro. At the same time, they began the complicated management of the international correspondence project.
Afghanistan also returned to the group, through data analysis about the war after September 11th, and through a chronicle in the newspaper Público. The work of collecting and questioning politicians continued, this time because of the municipal elections.
Three more special newspapers were published: *A visit to Lisbon*, which served as a guide for the exhibition made for the parents, *Travel diary*, resulting from the visit to Belgian correspondents, and *The contrarian kids—storytellers* with our vision of the class' history written in the form of a play, of which we only performed excerpts.
In total, the class published 24 newspapers over 3 years, plus 6 special editions, one of which was translated into Dutch. In addition to the newspapers and special editions, they posted all the projects chosen for this purpose on the class website. At the end of the fourth year, they produced a CD-ROM containing the projects, the texts, a copy of the website, and a class presentation, the result of preparatory work for the meeting with the correspondents... a

meeting that became the main activity for mobilising children, mothers and fathers, the mediator, and the teacher, for a dozen joint meetings in addition to a great deal of curricular work.

Notes on the process of involving adults

The population

The neighbourhood gained some notoriety in the Lisbon area and throughout the country since a series of robberies at a Cascais highway gas station in the early 2000s. A television station and a widely circulated weekly newspaper have since used former students from our school, boys between 15 and 17 years old, when they want to illustrate what '*young delinquents*' are like.
One of the groups that was very active at the time was made up of former colleagues from the same class, who were quickly expelled from school when they moved on to the fifth grade. Obviously, they were the heroes to some of the younger pupils. And these do everything they can to get noticed, hoping to join the 'gang' when they are old enough.
But adults usually have different dreams for their children.

The School and Families

For three years, efforts were made to empower those who wished to establish a parents' association and overcome resistance and distrust from the school, which often failed to meet with parents and children. The first initiatives were launched by an institution offering after-school activities. This failed due to a lack of parental interest. The following year, there were some attempts by the

Executive Council, supported by the Pedagogical Council, also without success. Then, a Cape Verdean mother of one of my pupils began to participate, at my insistence, in the meetings of the Pedagogical Council. I was supported in this by the mediator, who is of Cape Verdean descent. I succeeded to convince the president of the Pedagogical Council of the importance of co-opting the mediator into that body.

The class and the families

During the three years we worked together, the number of class attenders fluctuated between 16 and 23 children. I lost six and gained three, due to ongoing social housing resettlements. Within the group that always accompanied me, two pupils had a parent with education beyond the 4th grade, and eight had illiterate parents. Only one family has some reading habits. Of the nine boys, seven spent almost all the time they weren't at school on the street, where I encountered them repeatedly.

There were four families where, from the first year, the mother, even if illiterate, showed interest in their child's progress at school. There were other mothers who, initially, showed little interest, had a bad impression, or were ashamed about their children, speaking to me, and often in front of them, in these terms:

- He's a bit of a simpleton, isn't he?
- She doesn't regulate herself very well, does she?
- But does he do anything right, with you?
- I know what I have at home, I don't know how you do it.
- Look, as far as I'm concerned, there's no problem! If necessary, give her a spank if she deserves it!

– When he misbehaves, let me know, and I'll deal with him!

Living and speaking in the neighbourhood is important.

The *Read, tell and show* moments helped me learn a lot about the tensions in the neighbourhood: the fights, the families involved in illicit businesses, the more organised families, the families where only 'honest' money enters. The children talk about the drinking, the robberies, the police raids, and reveal the discomfort that all this causes for the other residents.

I cross-referenced information every morning, during another small ritual, when I went to buy bread at the neighbourhood bakery, next to the sports newspaper kiosk. The baker, but also the kiosk vendor, mother of one of my pupils, were equivalent to a broadcast of Country side TV programme. They helped me contextualise the information; all I had to do was make one or two observations.

The bakery was also, in my first year of work, a good place to start parent-teacher meetings. I often managed to speak with the parents there, or at the grocery store next door. Little by little, the bakery also became a place where I received messages. In a queue that also included the teacher Pascal, we would talk directly — or indirectly — about such and such a problem that had occurred at the school.

I think we achieved the institutional relationship through two initiatives: the mobilisation for the speed bumps on the Portela Road and the interviews with the owners of the neighbourhoods little businesses[66]. We gave each of the interviewees an illustrated

[66] See above.

booklet containing all the interviews.

Parents' meetings

In the first year, the children and I showed the parents the A4-sized project books that the class produced. Then I showed the work plans, and — with the children's permission — a bit of the video that Assunção came to record in our classroom.
After listening to the families, I changed the day and time of the parent meetings, but they were always after 6:30 pm or during the weekend. Generally speaking I managed to get at least one adult from each family to attend.
I showed the responses from two political parties, the banker, the embassy, and other people to requests made by my students.
Some were surprised by their children's work. Everyone is surprised that all the students passed to the 3rd grade at the end of the 2nd grade.

Our exhibition: 6 problems concerning nature

At the beginning of my second year of work, a visit to the Zoo triggered a very broad project, carried out together with Fátima Monteiro's class, a colleague who had been at the school for 10 years. It was a project about animals and environmental problems, but also about the evolution of humankind and skin color, done by six groups, all of them with children from both classes. As the project grew, so did the desire to do what I had done so many times before: to hold an exhibition to show the work to the parents. I challenged my colleague, and she accepted.
At the parents' meeting, scheduled for 7 p.m., nearly 40 people

showed up, representing two out of every three students. Again, many were skeptical.

– Mine isn't capable of doing that.
– Oh! But you did that all by yourself?
– Yeah, you did it with someone else, like always, you probably didn't do anything.

But also astonishment:

– I didn't know he knew all this.
– Look, for the past two weeks he's been talking about nothing else: the ozone hole, all the time.
– Do you really think this is the case, that this is bad? So, what about me, with this skin type, does the sun's rays also harm me?
– Oh sir, now my daughter is telling me that I can't sell small fish.
– I didn't know it was like that at school.

The presentation was very well received. In February, it had another consequence.

Embryo of the parents' association

Several complaints at the school became regular complaints, because of some teachers' absences, because of racist insults between children, but also coming from adults, all triggered by the disappearing of bread offered during recess.

Recess, a very aggressive place, was always one of the areas of concern. While some of the teaching staff often resigned from supervision, it is also true that, that year, due to a cut in subsidies, a distressing practice was encouraged.

Until the end of the previous calendar year, a small bread roll with butter, sometimes with ham or cheese, was distributed every day

during recess. The expense was covered by a subsidy from an institution, and there was a contribution, I would say symbolic, from the parents.

After discontinuing this distribution due to lack of funds, some children began bringing snacks consisting of juices, sodas, and industrial cakes or breads with chocolate. A system of extortion, in exchange for protection, quickly developed among the scholars, making conflicts during recess even more unbearable and leading them to join our class council.

To maintain the Council as a regulatory instrument for the class, I announced to the class that I, as an adult, would intervene in this matter within the Pedagogical Council.

The mother who was on the Pedagogical Council, who already knew the story and had some "side conversations" after the presentation, spoke with the mediator and me, and we both considered that it was the right time to mobilise more people. We told the mother that legally she should make the proposal, but that we would support her. She accepted, on the condition we were to be present at the first meeting, so that everybody who showed up would understand that it was an institutional matter for the school, and that it wasn't something that came to her mind just because she wanted it.

The meeting included several mothers and one father. Mothers from the class with whom we did the exhibition, mothers from the class with whom we worked with regarding the neighbourhood project, mothers from my class, as well as some mothers with children in the 1st grade, enrolled in a parental education project promoted by the City Council.

They decided to move forward with forming a parents' association, they wanted to organize themselves to see if they could raise funds for snacks, and they talked for almost an hour about violence in the playground. At that meeting, a mother who came from Cape Verde, with her children already grown, stressed in Portuguese, with evident traces of her mother tongue, explained: "*It's not the African's child who causes problems. The African's child is well-behaved. The real problem is the child born here. Their parents come from there, they don't teach them like they do there, not like they do here. Their children wander the streets, like vagrants. That's the one who causes problems.*" They will meet again to choose who will take over the first board of directors to deliver the statutes."

The second exhibition "Around Us"

At the end of the second school term, we finished a long project with another 3rd-grade class, led by Cláudia Cardoso, on the theme "Around Us". I suggested to my class and my colleague that we present the work to our parents in a small exhibition, as we did when we finished our research on the environment.
The work was displayed in the school library, and we sent invitations to the parents and some people who helped us carry out the work such as the police, the Sumolis guide.
People started arriving throughout the afternoon, from 6 PM until 8:30 PM.
Upon arrival, they received a book that we had created to accompany the exhibition.
Of the 34 scholars in the two classes, 20 (10 of the then 17 pupils in my class) appeared at the exhibition, accompanied by their parents;

others came alone. Two police officers appeared, representing the commissioner who had received us at the police station. This last visit was very well received by the children, who felt their work was clearly valued. The mothers present at that moment watched with pleasure as the children explained to the police officers what they had done.
There were always some attendees, presenting their work both to their own parents and to the parents of classmates, depending on the topics each one worked on and mastered best.

In the classroom

On the first day after the Easter term break, I explained to the students that showing what we did in an exhibition was different from showing how we do things in our daily lives. I reminded them of last year's video and suggested that we now show parents our work “live”.
They quickly lined up, and on Friday there was a parents’ meeting attended by everyone. We agreed that upon entering, each of us would continue our plan work, that afterwards we would work on a text together, and that we would finish up some Council matters, which we were purposely extending.
Only two children immediately said they weren't coming and that their parents couldn't come: one of the girls who had brought her mother to the exhibition, giving a remarkable presentation of the work, and a boy who had been very absent at that time because of a prolonged therapy session that caused him to miss two days a week from Christmas until the middle of the third term, and which made him somewhat distant from some classroom activities, no

matter how hard the others tried to keep him informed about our affairs.
Bernardo and Isaías were represented by their mothers. Elson couldn't bring anyone: he came alone.
Together, we showcased our work, based on the agreed-upon work plan[67].

In the formation of the parents' association

Around June 1st, after having "normalised" their snacks without much formality, chatting amongst themselves on the street, the parents scheduled another meeting to formalise the first board of directors of the parents' association, again insisting that the mediator and I be present. There were the same people, plus some new ones, who came mainly to complain. The process was led by three mothers who had been at the previous meeting, one from each of the aforementioned classes, now elected as members of the board. One of the three fathers present joined. They are three Cape Verdeans, one Portuguese. A very active Roma mother says that "*at this moment*" she cannot be part of the board.
The discussion showed that there was much to be done, also with adults, parents and teachers. I noted with 'mixed feelings':
– Teachers have to teach the right rules.
– The children have to wear smocks.
– Teachers need to scold more.
– You have to learn them the national anthem.

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[67] The full Portuguese text is published in Paulus, Pascal (2001): "Os pais na escola" (Parents at school).

– We need to fire the teachers who are frequently absent.
– We need to prosecute teachers who hit children.

End-of-year celebrations

At the end of the school year, a collective activity is proposed for the school: an exhibition of all the classes around a central theme: "Each book a friend". The exhibition was scheduled from 1:30 pm to 6:00 pm. Three of us insisted it would go until 8:00 pm. And, in fact, by 6:00 pm, only about ten parents showed up.
The rest came later, after work[68].
However, as I mentioned, we had embarked on a theatrical adventure. Therefore, we invited the parents and friends of the class to our performance of *The Eye of the Wolf.* When the news spread, even during preparations, that our long-time correspondent an cultural advisor of the Swiss embassy, would be present, there was even an illiterate mother helping her son memorise his role, first memorising the lines he read to her. And in the late afternoon, my students enthusiastically welcomed not only the advisor, but also the commissioner of the PSP (Public Security Police) from our precinct, while some former students found it strange that "the Cops" would come to school, even after seven o'clock in the evening, to see 'kids' stuff'. Everyone had family watching, except for one of the main roles, but his father was there in the afternoon,

[68] It's far too easy to think that simply saying one can miss work for school matters and that the school will issue a certificate is enough, when parents and their bosses are poorly educated: "Who pays for the hours we miss?" is the first question. Here too, we need collectively to change perceptions.

during the dress rehearsal.

The following year, the class mobilised their own families, plus some from other classes, to help carry out the correspondence project, co-financed by the Oeiras City Council. They took advantage of some exhibitions of work and projects throughout the year to sell paintings and to organize social gatherings, with the sale of cakes.

As the school year draws to a close, the class that had all the documents and photographs from the "*We Went to Belgium*" project to display inspires the others, proposing a general presentation of the work and projects carried out throughout the year at school. On the first Saturday after the end of the school year, there is a mini-festival throughout the afternoon, attended by most of the school population, friends and family, teachers and school staff. The children leaving the school to move on to the fifth grade used the day for extended farewells, rummaging through newspapers, projects and little books, reviving memories of their time at the school, known among them as the "Old School".

Two final notes:

– Several of my students, young males, had and still have difficulty defining who they want to "please": the group out there, calling for them, or the teacher and this class with rules, work rituals, but also with considerable freedom and relative calm.

  Engaging parents in classroom activities also captivates the students themselves: they want to have things to show their parents. They no longer destroy what they've made just because I said I thought it was beautiful...

– The parents expressed interest in the school, making sure the children attended and behaved well. But this wasn't enough. It

took me a long time to win over the parents, to get them truly interested in their children's work. One school year wasn't enough.

I myself needed more than a year of (re)schooling to understand the deeper logic of the people and the neighbourhood.

Therefore, I think that our work with parents at our school compels us to stop the madness of annual faculty changes, something that seemed impossible in 2001.

Modi ke djudam.

> *They have already managed to isolate people in their cars. To imprison them in their homes in front of their televisions. They have dismantled the large factories. One of the last bastions where people can still meet, talk, and unite is the school.*
>
> *Gerard de Sélys and Nico Hirtt*

Looking back and rewriting, over time, implies a new reflection each time. Have I changed? Rather, I think I've gained awareness.

"*I wasn't progressive because reading certain authors told me I should be. I was progressive because I felt offended, as a human being, by the perversity of an unjust reality that denied what, increasingly, seemed to me to be the ontological vocation of humankind: to be more..*"[1]

Based on my experience with the school, first as a student, then as a teacher, I quickly developed a very critical view of this institution.

My students from the Outurela and Portela school and their families taught me how they viewed the school institution. Together — and for me once again — we rebuilt the space to adapt it to our collective learning needs. At the end of the third year of work at Outurela, we had an extended visit from Irene, who two years later gifted us with her book[2], part of which was written from out the class and about us. But before that, we had many conversations that we reconstructed into a dialogue.

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[1] Freire, Paulo (2002: 120).

[2] Santos, Irene (2004).

Notes from some conversations[3]

Irene: What's interesting is the way things happen. The children tell stories in *Read, tell and show* and there's immediately work to be done.

Pascal: Yes. The *Read, tell and show* approach kicks off many work situations. It's not very difficult to take the children's lives and see what can be developed.

Irene: The projects you showed me about cell phones, about washing machines ...

Pascal: ... they were very important to them. In the second year, almost all of them still lived in shacks. Some had just moved into houses during the summer. Others moved by the end of January. Incidentally, I lost some students I had high hopes for: Rodrigo, who took care of the pig before coming to school; Sátia, who challenged me in Creole but later proved to be one of the most responsible students in the class; Nelson, from his middle name, who made us talk about Nelson Mandela. They were very surprised to learn that someone who had been in prison could become president of the republic. We had to talk about the various reasons that can lead people to be imprisoned. And especially that girl, who wanted to do a project on money, to find out when money is counterfeit, and if it's possible to see when money is photocopied. She also triggered the work on *"child mothers",* but I lost at here at the end of the 3rd grade.

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[3] Extracted, with slight adaptations, from Santos & Paulus (2004). Covers the period 1999-2003, including the school year in which students have already progressed to the 2nd cycle.

But you see: they didn't have a 'nice' house, but many of them have money. They were buying furniture and more appliances for the big day. And then, the kids were delighted. They couldn't believe I didn't have a dishwasher at home.

Irene: And all of this is part of the curriculum.

Pascal: Yes, it does. Only the way it's presented differs. From my perspective, the curriculum defines a set of skills to be acquired and a certain amount of knowledge to solve problem situations. Writing, reading, arithmetic operations, spatial and temporal awareness— that is, what is referred to as the set of knowledge that students have to learn in the first cycle — all of this is just tools. As they master the tools better, they are better able to solve problems. The more problems they solve, the better they are able to work with the tools.

Irene: So you take advantage of situations, interests, and concerns that arise, but there are also times when you 'give' material and create situations or formats that interest the children.

Pascal: I do. In other words, to build a car, it's not necessary to invent the wheel. We're already at another level of knowledge. What knowledge exists that serves us to continue working? That's the 'material' we have to 'give'. Obviously, it helps to have objects of study to which we can refer: a text to improve, taking advantage of the work to introduce aspects of grammar; a training exercise to improve mental calculation skills — remember the 'multiplication table contests' — working with mathematical concepts (or 'pre-conceptualisation' if we accept the viewpoints of research in the experimental didactics of mathematics), based on stories, problems, sometimes presented as investigative situations of what

surrounds us, sometimes taking advantage of events. You know some of the mathematical stories.

Irene: You're not a permanently appointed staff member here at the school. It was somewhat by chance that you worked with the class for three years.

Pascal: Although currently not permanently appointed at the school, the risk of not being reassigned is very low, since mobility of permanently appointed staff members is enormous at this school. It's one of those schools where, as a rule, the permanently appointed are not present. This year, only 2 of the 19 teachers are permanent staff. And from last year, only 7 people remain. Of those 7, 3, including the two permanent staff members, form the Board, and 1 is the physical education teacher. Of 13 classes, 10 have a teacher who is working at this school for the first year.

Irene: But then, what about training programs focused on the school, the parents' association?

Pascal: Yes. This makes everything more complicated. The training... it's starting all over again. And there are no guarantees that in a year or two we won't have another radical change in the teaching staff. We can't even retain those who are already there: many are on contract and can't be permanent appointed. We risk seeing the parents' association demobilising again. At the moment, very little attracts them.

Irene: You mention the organisation and evaluation of work. In the Council, they also discuss responsibilities and tasks. Tasks such as money management are, in this context, very important because of the diverse values and meanings that may underlie them, and where conflict can emerge at any moment if sensitivities are not

carefully managed and addressed. But they are simultaneously essential tools for learning and for life in society itself. I think the parents realised the scope of some of the things you did with your students.

Pascal: Well. I saw the comments some mothers made to you while we were in Belgium. Things like, '*this teacher did much more than just teach what there is to teach*'.

But I don't know if that's true. I think that's just the job of a teacher. It doesn't seem to me the world remains outside the school; it seems more to me like school remains outside the world. Sometimes it even works: to simplify what comes from outside, to make it more workable. But often, one does not know what's happening. Often, essential details are lost, or even if they aren't lost, they go unnoticed. Dulce Pereira, who was our trainer last year, used to say that in the old days, in Cape Verde, stories weren't told except at night around the campfire. A habit that probably comes from the time of slavery. And that's why some elder people say you can't tell stories in broad daylight, which explains the bad luck some educators had in trying to get children's grandmothers to tell traditional stories. It's difficult to capture the contexts. It takes time. With or without multiculturalism. In fact, trying to define it is often an alibi for not doing what needs to be done.

Irene: I know. I was at a forum where, during a roundtable discussion, one of the participants proposed defining 'multiculturalism' *once and for all.* I replied that I couldn't agree, because multiculturalism isn't something that can be definitively defined like that. One might eventually come up with a definition, but when discussing fundamental issues like children's education or

conflict situations, it becomes clear that what constitutes dignity, respect, or the way to express them can change significantly, especially because we move beyond the purely rational plane. Each person is constructed like a mosaic, and builds their own multiculturalism.

Pascal: Yes, and sometimes the pieces of that mosaic are not easy to grasp and especially to articulate. Here in the neighbourhood, there's a Brazilian animator I work with a lot. He once told me that it was only here in Portugal that he became aware that he was mixed-race, because everyone constantly referred to him as not being white, asking what he was then. He usually answers: a human being. That may be the essential thing. But when we are creating bonds, we have to know more about the other person, their experiences, their culture. How do you define the culture of a Black child who comes from Brazil? A Cape Verdean child who was born here? A Roma girl who comes from the North and has been here for two years? Another who comes from Alentejo (inner region of Portugal) and only started living in a concrete house a year ago? The white children who were born here in the neighbourhood. They all have very different cultural roots from mine. And it's not possible to understand all these worlds in the light of my own cultural experience. Should I lock myself in the school and leave their culture (and mine) at the door? Or should I build bridges? Tell stories? Invent stories? Write down what they tell me.

Irene: You place great importance on writing. Everything is recorded, you have many class newspapers, the special editions...

Pascal: Of course, the entire pedagogical context is a result of my connection, first with colleagues in institutional pedagogy in France

and currently with colleagues from the MEM (Modern School Movement Portugal). Much of what I do is much better documented by colleagues from the Movement[4]. Now here, in this neighbourhood, writing had something even more important... to give history. What is not written dissolves in time, dies and disappears.

Irene: It reminds me of that scene in the movie *Fato completo ou à procura de Alberto* (from Inês de Medeiros, 2001) in which a boy speaks of himself, saying: "*My life has no (his)story[5]!"*

Pascal: Yes. It's true that their place in history is unclear, especially to themselves. I overheard a conversation between older students during recess: *Listen, why is tomorrow a holiday?* It was the eve of April 25th (Carnation Revolution), and the question probably had to do with one of those circumstantial tests, weekly quizzes, or something similar. The answer was enlightening: *"So, you don't know? That was the day the Portuguese stopped bossing us around there and started bossing us around here.*" Who's speaking here? But they're also lost in time and place. They're not in Portugal, they're not in Cape Verde. They don't even know for sure what nationality they have.

Irene: It caught my attention when one of the boys, while reading a text about his 'journey' through Lisbon, read Chicago instead of Chiado [wel known square in Lisbon]. Because, in fact, his imagination brings Chicago closer to him than the physically neighbouring city. Its geography is very malleable, and even though

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[4] In the magazine *Escola Moderna*, published by MEM.

[5] In Portuguese: *história*, which simultaneously means story and history.

this is a growing trend that far surpasses the issue of migrations and symbolic reconstructions, what happens is that the children have to know how to situate themselves in relation to formal structures that do not keep pace with this malleability. This also implies personal work in terms of their history in time and space so that they can then confront formal society.

Pascal: Of course, there are things that have to do with their age: with the timeline, they realised that, after all, whoever invented the telephone lived before Pascal, and Pascal didn't know Pythagoras personally.

Other things are harder to perceive. The latent aggression of white children towards black children, for example. But also the constant revolt and contempt with which some young people speak of whites. The difficult relationship between Roma families and families of African origin. The difficult relationship between Roma families themselves. And then, they provoke: when the students were in the 2nd grade at the time I became their teacher, they challenged me by speaking Creole. The response came immediately, in Flemish. Faced with general astonishment, I made an initial negotiation: since we work in Portugal, the contact language would become Portuguese.

Irene: You never told me that. That means you had an adjustment period there. But it's funny. At one of the parent-teacher meetings, a mother from Cape Verde became concerned when you were talking about the dictionaries they were building as they prepared for their trip to Belgium. She said: "*But are they learning Creole at school now?*"with an air of outrage. And you replied: "*No, I'm the one who's learning some Creole.*" It was noticeable that she was pleased

but intrigued at the same time. You valued Creole, but school is not the usual place for it to be approached and worked on.

Pascal: Yes. But you see, even parents put school out of context, out of their own context. Do you remember Luís telling me: *'I'm fed up with Pascal's old school; I want a new school, a modern one.'* As you can imagine, I was interested in understanding what kind of modern school he wanted. I asked: *'What do you mean by that?'* And he replied immediately: *'You never give photocopies to make and paint!'* It's true that editing one's own journals, creating one's own research projects and booklets takes more work than filling out worksheets after photocopying manuals. But we were talking about the parents.

Irene: There are certain moments when you feel you are mobilising the parents: the projects, the exhibitions, the theater, the trip. All of this played a role in the formation of the parents' association.

Pascal: Yes. But it was also important that we had a mediator for two years, who helped a lot. But again: one year the ministry pays for the presence of the mediator, next year it doesn't. This year, there is no money for mediators. I don't know if the Parents' Association will be able to cope.

Irene: You've said several times that the project for the Afghan women was important. But do you have more reasons to say that, besides the newspaper sales that took place?

Pascal: The special newspaper project helped the children reconstruct and solidify their collective history. For the parents... there aren't many... Just the fact that some mothers sold so many newspapers, that they got involved in the initiative, was something I found important. And a school employee told me that she thought

it was very important, especially because bad things happen in many Portuguese homes too.

Irene: These are subtle languages requiring a good 'nose' for ...

Pascal: But to get back to the parents. I don't know what's going to happen this year. It's going to be a difficult year. There's little continuity, there's been another big change in the teaching staff. I'm supporting teacher this year and don't have a class. And we report on the work of a class, not a school.

Irene: It's funny how you've been constantly and increasingly demanding and offering things to the parents and other members of the neighbourhood. That is, always focused on the children's learning process, you've been seeking collaboration, holding them accountable, but on the other hand you've always 'accounted' for the work you were doing and offering them objects of recognition, such as the book with the interviews with the neighbourhood shopkeepers, or the exhibition book.

Pascal: Isn't that's an exaggeration? Worrying about accountability. Worrying about producing new material with the students. Worrying about putting together exhibitions. All of that seems like excessive zeal. And for what? Don't they learn from the manual yet? Let me doubt that. We're constantly patching things up. But it takes time, a lot of time.

Irene: Another aspect that seems important to me in this work has to do with the possibility of children experiencing their various social roles at school, in addition to fulfilling their 'role' as students, and what, incidentally, can also be said of family members. That is, their 'roles' as siblings, children, parents, users of the public transport system, street children, television viewers, employees,

neighbours, etc., happen and are worked on in the school context, tailored to the needs and rhythms of each one.

Pascal: They can live their role as students, while I live my role as a teacher. Once, when the students asked me why I remembered to organize the work through the Council, I replied that I had seen other teachers do the same thing and that I thought it was a good idea. One of them asked me if the Council was forever. I replied that it was like that as long as I wanted it to be. That I had the power as a teacher to organise the work together with them or not. Jessica, the same one who later considered the democratic voting on pre-selected people, unrepresentative, didn't think it was very fair. I told her that the school is organised by adults, that I was responsible for their learning and therefore had the power of decision. The discussion of the *'old school'* came up again. One of them continued to think that this way we had much more work. I replied that it was even more work for me. They were astonished. I can still see that boy raising his arms and saying, "*So, why do you do it this way, Pascal?*"?", with genuine astonishment. I replied that this was how they learned best.

But when, some time later, a very serious conflict arose, which led me to decide not to authorise the Council and to take some drastic measures, they were very shocked by the difference and the power it held. And I was amazed to see how, even so, these great dissenters obeyed my orders with relative ease. The shock was because of the form, not the content. When, the following week, I proposed reintroducing the Council, they agreed immediately, with a sigh of relief. Especially since we were in the midst of preparing the second exhibition *Around Us...* with colleague Cláudia and her

group. And this preparation required using the regulatory instruments that we had built in the classroom, based on the discussions in the Council. They were agents of the process.

Irene: Therefore, for those students and their families, there was a different perspective on themselves.

Pascal: Absolutely. And I think that's what's important. Changes happen with small things. And I like to believe that they happen every time we organise ourselves differently. But I continue apprehensive, you know. As I said, it's a class, not a school. The class ceased to exist, the disturbance too. I fear school might reclaim its autistic role. No matter how many educational projects we undertake. The people are different. The connections have disappeared. I hope we don't have to wait for the children of the students who left now...[6]

Influences of an influenced practice

Eco-education

In all the educational work I am involved in, eco-education occupies

[6] I was out of the school for a few years to coordinate the implementation of a project for the Cascais City Council. A preliminary visit to the school, to prepare for my return, left me somewhat hopeful. The group of colleagues – obviously not permanently appointed staff – who 'took over' the school, found their way, including some openness to the community. The school is full of activity records and photographs. Autism hasn't turned into medieval darkness...

a central place[7].

In the case of the experience analysed in the previous chapter, the school itself becomes the stage for this eco-education in an apparent paradox: *"...the school becomes one of the places where the unity and globality of the learning processes of children and adults can be most clearly materialised, leading to a view of the teacher training process and the student training process in a relationship of temporal, spatial and methodological articulation."*[8].

This centrality of educational setting exists not only in the case of work with children, but also with adults, when the rules governing training work are defined together. It is precisely this instituting process that allows everyone to *'take ownership'* of the action.

Eco-education becomes a vehicle for learning for everyone I work with, children and adults. For me personally, it clarifies three aspects of my learning: it clarifies points of view, highlights the need to work within the system, and reinforces self-confidence.

This education reveals itself here in all its political aspects, in the construction of democracy and citizenship. This necessitates clarification of the educator's position.

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[7] I refer here to the concept in the sense of Furter uses it and cited by Mirna Montenegro (2003) and Rui Canário (2000: 140). He defines it as the '*educagenesis*' of educational processes, in which all the people involved interact, regardless of their 'status', whether they are student, father, mother, trainer, trainee, child, friend, or a combination of several statuses. Thus it appears: "*... the concept of eco-education as an integrated space of interdependent and transformative relationship between physical involvement and social involvement.*" (Montenegro, 2003: 58).

[8] Canário, Rui (2000: 140)

"*It is not possible to speak of democracy and at the same time accept without any reaction the neglect to which the educational space is relegated, the very education of poor, proletarian, black children, as if they were mere <u>those</u> ontologically inferior or inferior by birth. Connivance in such mistreatment make us complicit, diminishes us even more when compared to those who, though <u>small</u>, do it out of conviction or ideological-political choice..*"[9].

My awareness grew as I internalised the work with children in State school and with their parents. It helped me to outline lines of action, to perceive the difference between the beautiful, effective laboratory work in the isolated private school, which can become closed in on itself, and the work subject to the contradictory rules of the State school. The basic problem becomes apparent when the full intervention of everyone forces the trainer or educator to clarify the limits of everyone's power and to clarify for themselves how they define the limits of their own power.

António Nóvoa refers to that maxim attributed to Bernard Shaw but changing to *"Those who <u>know</u>, do; those who don't <u>know</u>, teach"* and then say: *"Today, a new paradigm is gaining increasing traction: those who know, do; those who understand, teach. It is this understanding, in its deepest sense [...], that characterises the training of teachers, undoubtedly one of the most difficult, but also one of the most fascinating, professions in contemporary societies."*[10].

I would like to believe that the trainers of teachers embrace this statement, but careful observation of the (lack of) interactions

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[9] Freire, Paulo (2002: 226)

[10] Nóvoa, António (1988: 127).

between those trained and those who educate, in schools, for me, does not support that idea. It seems to me that the school remains deaf and mute, as Fernand Oury said in 1977, including the school that trains teachers.

Constant contact with people referring to education and training — from the illiterate father in the neighbourhood, the woman who dreams of starting a business, to the neoliberal political leader[11] — requires a constant dismantling of schemes that, as I realised, are instilled in children from an early age. This dismantling becomes necessary because those schemes are not based on ideas of democratic education, but on the complete emptying of everything that is collective, labeling them as individual freedom, freedom of choice, free market, and free choice.

Working with people involves me in their life stories as in my own. We once used the now well-known image of the Lorenz attractor (the butterfly's flight)[12] to argue that any intervention within a system inevitably causes a consequence. Butterflies that begin to fly cause small disturbances around them. We illustrated the idea with some stories from our work with children and adults.

I have also recently argued that becoming more and more aware of the phenomenon of social reproduction, as discussed by Bourdieu

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[11] Like the one who suddenly decides, without knowing from the inside what he should know, to reorganise and regroup, thus forcing the actors involved to expend energy on rebuilding what was already being built...

[12] Paulus, Pascal & Silva, Romualdo (2004)

and Passaron, does not inevitably lead to suicide or inaction[13].

"*As a progressive educator, I cannot, in the name of the duty to prevent further suffering for the working classes, limit the universe of their epistemological curiosity to knowledge of duly depoliticised objects. In other words, I cannot depoliticise the understanding of and intervention in the world because I think I must be charitable to the working classes, preventing them from suffering more because they lack the immediate means to fight back, or because I have been swayed by the 'charms' of the prevailing neoliberal ideology. An ideology of privatisation, never of losses, because these must continue to be paid for by the working classes.*"[14].

The vulnerability that the established power creates for people[15], disinvesting in education and training, while claiming the opposite, turning education into a quasi-market highly attractive to private groups, where student support programs primarily benefit those who already have extensive access to privileged education, is a focus of attention. The choice of topics for working with adults and children is an example of this. To work with them, I have to be where the system places them, not where I would like them to be.

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[13] In the text "O Grande Irmão cidadão... ou talvez não?" (Citizen Big Brother... or maybe not?) published in the proceedings of the 3rd CIED meeting, ESE Lisbon.

[14] Freire, Paulo (2002: 119).

[15] This chapter is written at a time when Portuguese education system is in crisis due to the unsuccessful restructuring by the Minister of Education, when the Prime Minister abandons the country, pointing to everyone else as potential destabilisers, and when the entire nation rises to watch... a football match. Juca Chaves' poem *Brasil é campeão* can just change nation,

Moreover, the private schools I've worked in, the associations and organisations, also partially succumb to the collective egocentrism inherent to private institutions — calling it "organisational culture" — closing themselves off or risking doing so, transforming themselves into islands, far removed from other realities[16].

The choice, therefore, is one of constant searching to continue focusing on what's essential: developing "*A set of techniques, organisation, work methods, and internal institutions, born from the practice of active classes, places children and adults in new situations that require personal commitment, initiative, action, and continuity from each individual. These situations — real work, time and power constraints — often create anxiety and naturally lead to conflicts; these, if unresolved, simultaneously prohibit common activity and the affective and intellectual development of the participants. Hence the need to use, in addition to material tools and pedagogical techniques, conceptual tools and internal social institutions capable of resolving these conflicts, permanently facilitating material, affective, and verbal exchanges at conscious and unconscious levels.*"[17].

In these pages, I have sought to show the importance that relationships with others hold for me, the mutual intervention based on true, frank, and direct dialogue, in order to develop a pedagogy of intervention with people of very diverse ages.

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[16] That was exactly what the children and I felt in our difficult relationship with our first inter-school correspondents. I probably misunderstood the evolution that had occurred in the school's 'users' since I left it as a teacher ten years earlier.

[17] Oury, Fernand & Vasquez, Aida (1977: V-31).

Putting an end to schooled pretending, to the Taylorisation of learning, is evident in the choice of work organisation, which itself generates the learning process and the construction of knowledge.
This is the counterpoint to a much more vulgar isomorphism, which finds its expression in primers and in the letter-by-letter teaching of language in the instruction of illiterate people, children or adults, and which remains 'fashionable' almost a century after Vygotsky, so many years after the New School, Freire, the birth of institutional pedagogy and modern school movements in various European countries. Unfortunately, it seems that the ridiculousness of 'letter-based teaching'[18] doesn't even offend the person themselves[19].
Therefore, it is even more difficult to restore the perception of learning within the globalising context from which it should never have strayed, due to pedagogy and psychology run into, having been influenced for some time by behaviourists enamoured with the apparent effectiveness of Taylor and Ford in the industrial revolution.

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[18] There was even recently an education minister who referred to the first cycle as the school where letters and arithmetic are taught.

[19] As Carmen Cavaco testifies (2002: 73): "Júlia says, 'one of the girls had one of those primers that had a little goose that said – Cá, cá, that was the 'a', it had a cow that said um, that was the 'u', it had a heron that said pi pi, that was the 'i', and I learned those letters when I was little and those are the ones I know [...] look, the letters that were there, I still remember them today, were the ones they explained to me, those are the ones I know'."

What both big and little ones have taught me.

Entering the school in Outurela revealed to me a genuine culture shock. There were people here who belonged to very different groups than mine.
Solidarity mixes with dependency and paternalism; the neighbourhood proclaims in graffiti that "Black is beautiful," in a clear response to the forced ghettoisation by “others”.
Adults who dream of a different life for their children see the school as a means of change. But the concept of school they refer to, is one of segregation, exclusion, where they have to take a stand to succeed. Children rebel when they don't see the same textbooks, when there is no homework, when a Black teacher of Guinean origin is placed in another class, because they want the same conditions as the others: many books, many assignments, teachers of the same colour.
Children import fictional models of school. They don't realise that television series that caricature school with crude and dubious humor are just that: an even bigger caricature of school than the actual institution itself. So they reinvent school, which doesn’t seem to be the one the teacher proposes, based on the images presented to them.
At first, all of this is shocking because, despite knowing that this is the most frequent representation, I have difficulty understanding the underlying reasoning.
The children teach me to be more patient when I show my distress, they put things into perspective when I'm surprised by their verbal and physical aggression, and they become cooperative in building

the foundations of the bridge I envisioned.

The work about Lisbon, which also serves illiterate mothers to learn to consult the metro and public transport map, and the solidarity project with the women of Afghanistan, which immersed the class for three months in a retrospective that linked their own actions and interventions to the Charter of the Rights of the Child, are just two examples of what this construction has allowed.

Just as important, or even more so, than the publication of a special paper dedicated to women opposed to the Taliban was the work of raising awareness among the children themselves, who became confident in their own useful and possible abilities to intervene actively. It is there, in action, that children who were said to need support, interventions, and to be "experts" in troubled neighbourhoods, became *politicians*, intervening in the *polis*. But I had to learn how to guide them in this discovery.

On more than one occasion, the children learned, without scheduled citizenship classes, to perceive the difference between empty rhetoric and the real possibilities for intervention. They showed me their capacity to intervene for themselves and to help others to also intervene for themselves.

They categorically refused, at a Council meeting, to 'beg,' even if it meant giving to others, but agreed to share the profits from their work with others.

As a democrat, I consider it essential to study national history, necessary to better understand my condition as a citizen. With the students from Outurela, I learned how the contribution of the security forces can be useful. The children maintained an exchange of correspondence and information with the local Police

commissioner about the history of flags, about security aspects, and invited him to the play they prepared, altering established norms.

I realised, through my students, that I cannot study the discoveries without looking at them not only as a European, but also as an African, a descendant of the enslaved peoples, oppressed by the power that controlled (and controls?) the security forces.

They reinforced my critical distrust whenever someone grants themselves absolute, majority, or prolonged power, at any level of decision-making.

The children from Outurela and Portela showed me, as a family, the points of divergence and convergence between our experiences. They showed me parent-child relationships different from those I have as a father with my daughters. They explained to me, in practice, the codes of honour that drive them, the hierarchy that governs relationships in their families.

The girls in the classroom put their life knowledge and experience as little organizers to work in organising the classroom.

Little by little they appropriated this cultural universe unknown to them. The boys followed.

After making their way around the classroom space, the children were thrilled to present their work to the community.

This demonstrated enthusiasm, along with her communication skills, reinforced my view that promoting civic engagement with children from kindergarten onwards involves intervention projects and the creation of reference documentation based on those projects.

It is this civic engagement on the part of the people I work with that

I want to promote, having become aware of my democratic obligation to do so and believing that it is necessary to have new generations capable of continuing to compel those in power to respect this democratic right.

Educator or trainer?

Marie-Christine Josso said that the educator is like a double agent, sometimes a defender of order, appointed to enforce it, and sometimes a facilitator of learning, thus reinforcing people's ability to question or alter the order. She characterised four types of "agents"; two of the type *educator*, of the type *trainer.*

The *educator,* connected to the institution and the curriculum. she characterised as *instructor* or *activist.* The *trainer*, person connected to the graduate, is defined as *master* or as *passeur.*

The instructor is *in the extremis* the military instructor. the one who trains the trainee in the use, assembly, and disassembly of the weapon. He ensures that the trainee is proficient in the subject matter.

The activist is typically more concerned with values than with education.

The master, the possessor of knowledge, works with the apprentices, ensuring that they gradually acquire their knowledge. He is usually concerned with the well-being of the apprentices.

The passeur facilitates the path laid out by the person who wants to be passed along, like the passeurs who helped fugitives in the mountains during World War II.

Where should I position myself? I recognise traits of a master, even

a master who appreciates having some apprentices continue in his footsteps. Why I do the same? I also recognise traits of a passeur, guide, a facilitator: I don't want to decide on the paths taken, but I want to help navigate them, eventually indicating the necessary detours and the occasional dead end. There are also traits of an instructor. It's the pragmatic side that regularly emerges, to dispatch a technical or secondary matter and return to the more global and collective project.

It doesn't seem to me that to be an activist of the institution. But I use it, with conviction, because it's there, available despite the bureaucrats, the power, the 'caricature' of itself.

In any case, it seems confirmed to me that my strategies stem from an isomorphic pedagogical practice in working with children and adults, in which ideas from Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy are integrated, with institutional pedagogy[20], born with Jean and Fernand Oury, serving as the frame of reference. It is described as follows:

> *"Here, the term 'institution' refers to the entire system of norms and rules that governs the functioning of the training: mandatory (or optional) attendance, schedules, objectives, use of time, relationship management, internal regulations, funding, etc. These norms are said to be instituted, that is, imposed on the trainees.*
>
> *Institutional pedagogy considers it important for learning development to allow trainees to also be instituting agents, that*

[20] Twenty years later, I would say it was more of an anthopogogical practice, the result of my reflection following my civic involvement when I was no longer working directly with children.

is, to establish these norms themselves, or at least to be able to adapt them through negotiation. This instituting movement, which allows trainees to participate in the construction of their training, negotiating, for example, a redefinition of the program, the arrival of an unforeseen participant, different evaluation methods, is considered by this pedagogy to be educational in itself: trainees learn critical thinking, social constraints, negotiation, change, the exercise of freedom, and, in general, become actors in their own training. There are mechanisms that allow the group of trainees to influence their own training by taking charge of certain sequences themselves, constantly analysing the life of the group and its incidents, deciding on solutions, etc.

Some trainer training programs utilise this type of pedagogical initiative, placing maximum responsibility on the trainees for the construction and even the administrative and financial management of their own training.[21]

In fact, it's a definition that doesn't deviate much from the original one, given in 1958 by Jean Oury at a congress of the Institut Coopératif de l'École Moderne, where he coined the term, drawing an analogy with his work in Institutional Psychotherapy. He recently proposed an updated definition:

"Institutional Pedagogy is an open-ended set of possible answers to questions that, even if not explicitly formulated, arise for anyone who intends to work in education and learning. It is not a method... It is characterised both by the questions it asks and by the answers it develops."

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[21] Meignant, Alain (1999:199).

How do you put it into practice?

If it were enough to explain institutional pedagogy, we would already know how to do it. The cooperative classroom is not delivered as a "kit" and does not exist without a teacher, a person knowledgeable in one's craft.

We don't hide our faces; what is called citizenship and democracy in school are not ends in themselves, but a prerequisite for successful school learning. It comes down to desire, the desire of each individual to be in the class, to be part of the class. Then the children learn, or relearn. Not as well, but better.

Therefore, one needs masters and thus genuine training to achieve mastery—continuous training, in groups, with others: a personal and professional transformation.

Changing professions or changing professional habits."

It is worth reiterating to those who may be unaware that the practice of institutional pedagogy has its origins in the State primary, suburban school classroom, with children labeled as difficult by the Wise Men of Education.

Another kind of education is possible.

> *The education system has turned us into apprentice stenographers, into magnetic tapes that record and reproduce. How good it is to feel this breath of freedom, more or less complete, in experience, after many years of silence and oppression!*
> *Among thousands of ideas, some exceptional ones will emerge, probably one of them brilliant.*
>
> *Miguel Ángel Santos Guerra*

The legacy of the democratization of society has many heirs.
Legacy administrators, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes in bad faith, defraud the heirs each time they exclude them from the process of improving that legacy. They are undoubtedly acting in bad faith when they place the legacy at the service of economic power, in a mercantilist vision of freedom, concealing fraternity and equality.
Another kind of education, one that moves, raises awareness, and engages people, is possible because it exists. It is never desired by those who want to perpetuate themselves in power. The choice belongs to the educator.

Field of reflection

The choice I propose is one of questioning, of a project for intervention in life. Without a project, there is no questioning, without questioning there can be no project.

> *"Questioning one's plans often causes discomfort. How do you see yourself in five, ten years...? 'I don't really know, we'll see.' is*

> *the most frequent response obtained when young people, still in the initial school system, are asked to talk about their educational and/or professional guidance plans. For an adult audience, on the other hand, the answer most often points to a professional field, the development of a career, a particular profession."*[1]

I believe I have clarified for myself that my role is that of a trainer, of adults and children. I accept the use of the word educator[2], with all the reservations that the school institution imposes on me, insofar as it concerns *"a place where questions are constantly and systematically asked, with the peculiarity that the answers are already known beforehand"*[3].

A reflective attitude clarifies the questioning. And it reinforces the transferability of the idea. As a trainer, using the word as Josso defines it, I am obliged to ensure that the trainees "*are to be in action, think about the outcome of their action, understand the general principle, and generalise their action. For the experience to be educational, there must be a reflective attitude towards it, that is, to*

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1 Poulain, Martine (2002: 20).

2 Today I have some doubts regarding how Marie Christine Josso describes the roles of trainer and educator. I see the help given to people to develop, improve, go further, and build their learning path more as the work of a learning educator than a trainer. For me, the term trainer (formador) strongly suggests the idea forming, taking action away from the disciple. This may be a problem of mine related to how I understand the Portuguese language... However, I maintained the logic of Marie Christine Josso that I adopted at the time I originally wrote this part.

3 Canário, Rui (1999: 103) cita Philippe Meirieu

analyse and formalise it"[4]*.* This idea, when it becomes clear to those who are train, also gains strength for others."

Work field

The "others" in the neighbourhoods where we work, in the State school we attend, in their groups of belonging, force us to make choices and options. *"As working-class primary school teachers, confronted daily with misery, scarcity, violence, and oppression, it is difficult for us to share Rogerian optimism"*[5] said Fernand Oury and Aida Vasquez.

The methodological choice has been made: being with people, working on the meaning of things, educating for perception, unsettling to provoke questioning. None of this is original. It is the work of a master with his disciples. It requires the clarity of vision that allows one to separate the Pierre Bourdieu's reproductive political school from Paulo Freire's political school that raises awareness.

Fernand Oury's[6] statement that, in Taylor's time, it was beyond any possibility that the performer, while alive, should have any say, dates from 1971. For State schools and the population they serve, it seems to be the definition decision-makers in the European Community, at the beginning of the 21st century, want to impose.

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4 Liétard, Bernard (2002: 54).

5 Oury, Fernand & Vasquez, Aida (1967: 223)

6 Oury, Fernand & Vasquez, Aida (1977: I 27)

The contextualisation provided by the book *Tableau Noir*[7] regarding point in direction of that separation of State and private schools.
The field of work becomes clear to me:

– The space refers to public institutions, State schools and public places in the community;
– Time is the time needed to establish with the people the project that motivates them and that they will develop;
– Action requires the active participation of all individuals involved in the learning process.

Homo Habilis

The isomorphic nature of the practice described here is evident in its cooperative self-training aspect. Regardless of age, all individuals in the group are involved in the creation of the work project, its logistical organisation, and the shaping of time and space for its execution. The trainer occupies the visible role of facilitator-trainee, that is, they are also a learner.
In this approach, and regardless of age, learning takes place through reflected experience.
When theoretical knowledge is detailed, decontextualised from experience, didactic transposition becomes inevitable, and institutional or other pedagogy is considered going against the stream and therefore being labeled 'alternative'. In this regard, Manuel Sarmento[8] reminds us that *"all pedagogies are alternatives,*

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[7] ...which De Sélys and Hirtt (1998) wrote and which is worth reading.

[8] Sarmento, Manuel (2000: 114)

and those that are not (for example, 'teaching by objectives') are not pedagogies, since they do not contain a comprehensive conception of the human person to be formed, [...] they are rather technocratic orientations [...] alternatives to pedagogy."

It is not by retouching the makeup, introducing the term andragogy (Knowles) — the art of teaching man, as opposed to pedagogy, the art of teaching children or adolescents — that the idea of working *with* others is fixed.

It continues to be a model of transfer, of educating to feed — eventually a more informed consumer — an "improved" school model, as Rui Canário says.

From this perspective, andragogy's contribution to pedagogy is nothing more than a reinforcement of *education* that empties *training* (always referring to Josso's definitions). Its political implementation proves this through school practice, from e-learning to literacy through textbooks... and the packaging of training offers to individuals and institutions.

It is possible to trace another path: educere, to create ***jointly*.** The capacity to rise above oneself, to transform individual and collective experience into a source of reflection. This is possible in any context where people find themselves, among work partners of widely varying ages, all in the dual role of trainer and trainee.

For me, this meeting place for mutual formation is the school, because it is clear to me that when I speak of school, I speak of a place and a time of encounter and not of a model, much less a school model.

'*Educagenesis*' (Furter), that is, the educational potential of the territory where the action instituted by all takes place, was perhaps

the missing link for me at the end of 1999, and which the young and old of Outurela and Portela offered me.
I think it is this link that facilitates the transition from Cro-Magnon to Homo Habilis (Oury) as a collective instigator of learning, making another kind of education possible.

Lexicon

The explanations for the terms mentioned here serve only to provide context. They are not definitions or conceptualisations.

Board Games: In the language and math workshops, one can choose from games like Scrabble, Boogle, chess, checkers, Tangram, and various types of dominoes. There are also some games for practicing calculation, multiplication tables, and mental arithmetic.

Building of Numbers: A proposed arrangement of the first hundred numbers (0 to 99) that allows for easy visualisation of the decimal system's structure. A good aid for mental calculation, and very inexpensive: pencil and paper are all you need.

Class (news)paper: We publish a monthly A5 newspaper with 12 pages, exclusively featuring free texts (see **text work)** The newspaper's budget is developed and controlled cooperatively, covering events in which the class is involved and publishing products from writing workshops.

Computer: Back then, it was difficult to convince colleagues and superiors that in the first cycle of primary education, the computer's place is in the classroom as a work tool. At school, only three of us had a computer in the classroom, although without internet access. Two years later, the entire school was equipped and connected,

with one internet access point per classroom[1]. I still believe that a computer in a single-teacher classroom only makes sense when it's available inside the classroom. The "computer labs" are in the first cycle often nothing more than showcases for the promotion of so-called educational software, which isn't always interesting.

Council: Fernand Oury used to say that the Council is the *eye, ear, brain, and kidney* of the group. The Council guarantees the participatory and direct democracy of all group members. In the group described here, it includes several work moments: weekly and daily planning, evaluation of the individual work plan and collective work, and the meeting (often called the Council meeting, or just Council) to read the Diary are the established moments. At any time, as needed by the group, a collective discussion can become a Council meeting.

Cuisenaire / Cuisenaire-Pitágoras: Much of the work on systematising numeration, including visualising square and non-square numbers, involved Cuisenaire rods. In our class, Cuisenaire was associated with Pythagoras (multiplication tables) from early on. That's why the pair is sometimes referred to. It's also why a project was done on the life of Pythagoras: there were doubts as to whether he had been a friend of Cuisenaire, just as there were

[1] In our case, it was short-lived. The change of director also caused the Network to disappear, and we resumed the habit of clandestinely keeping old computers in the classroom to write articles for the class newspaper. The obligatory pilgrimages to the temple called the computer lab were used by my next group to maintain the group's website...

doubts as to whether Pascal had known Pythagoras personally.
There is a lot of literature on this material, developed by Georges Cuisenaire and popularised by Gattegno. A quick search will give you some clues.

Dairy: The diary consists of a sheet of paper with three columns: "we like," "we don't like," and "we propose," always displayed in the classroom on the wall where we affix the collective piloting instruments. Part of the Council meeting on Friday is reserved for reading the diary.

Exercise cards: In the room, there are over a thousand work or training proposals related to aspects of the program corresponding to the official national curriculum for the age group involved. These include writing proposals, mathematical investigation, experimental exploration, and exercises to practice spelling, grammar, text interpretation, and basic arithmetic operations. All training cards are self-correcting and have a colour code indicating the degree of difficulty specified with the children and according to the basic education program.

"I am already capable of" grid: A curriculum outline for the school year, adapted to children's vocabulary. The schedule allows each child to follow their school learning step by step.

Logo Turtle: The program for creating virtual micro-worlds, developed by Seymour Papert and included in the first cycle mathematics curriculum of 1989. The version we used (limitedly)

was MegaLogo®, distributed by a Portuguese company.

Plan / work plan / individual work plan: Non-collective work time is managed and organised based on an individual work plan, in which each person proposes the work they will do throughout the week, in groups, in pairs, or alone. This involves coordinating times with others. Each person's work is evaluated collectively each week, where everyone can make suggestions and offer support to others when requested or deemed necessary.

News: see **Read, tell and show.**

Person in charge (today): Each of the team members for the day.

Project / project phase (timeline): A project — usually in small groups — is a work on a topic that interested the whole class or the group developing it, after the content has been negotiated with the class. Projects can be purely informative or they can be action-oriented or intervention-based. They may or may not be related to each other. They are presented and discussed together, at times previously agreed upon in the Council during the weekly or term planning, in the case of larger projects. Projects also serve as an anchor for the school learning objectives defined by the current curriculum.

Quinta de Sales: The park near the school is a green space to be explored, since the recreation area has few trees and no grass. Starting in the second term, I asked parents for permanent

permission to 'pop over' to the *Quinta* whenever the work schedule allowed and we felt the need to do so.

Read, tell and show / news: This is a moment established at the beginning of each workday, where, according to a set routine that may vary throughout the year, everyone has the opportunity to recount, read, or show anything they consider useful, necessary, or fun to share with the group.

Responsibility / Task: Classroom, space, and time management is done jointly by the responsible individuals. There are more responsibilities than group members because the class is small. Responsibilities are defined, assigned, and rotated within the Council. Some responsibilities involve organising a rotating system to accomplish the inherent tasks. The responsible individual organises the tasks and indicates who performs them, based on a rotating schedule.

Selection of (free) texts: Whenever there are moments of independent work, children can choose to write texts, retellings, stories, or accounts based on the Read, tell and show activity, on archived suggestions, or simply use their inspiration of the moment. At pre-arranged times, each child presents the texts they want to share with the others. Throughout the year, routines for choosing texts, referred to as text selection, were established and modified, guiding the process to **text work.**

Self-study: Independent study was integrated within the work

organised by the individual work plan, which also regulates pair work and small group or project work, outside of the times specifically scheduled for that purpose. The children have the **exercise cards,** the research tools, the computer, the class library, and the school library are at their disposal for this independent study. They can, of course, always turn to the teacher.

Syllable box: A tool that allows for reading and writing practice. Starting with words that children know and analyse, we organise a personal box with syllables and letters resulting from this analysis. Some suggested activities then allow them to reconstruct words that all begin or end with the same letter or syllable.

Team (of the day): We organize the group into subgroups of 3, in which the teacher also participates. Each group is a team, which rotates the responsibility of organising the workday: preparing the daily plan based on the weekly plan, giving the floor during all group meetings, overseeing the correct use of materials when the respective person in charge is not present, distributing and collecting daily materials, notebooks and exercise cards holder at each person's workstation. On Council meeting days, the team of the day presides and acts as secretary.

Text work: In the language workshop and during planning time, children have the opportunity to write about whatever they want. After that, there is a **selection of texts.** All texts for publication undergo an editing process: they are corrected, checked for spelling and grammar, improved and enriched, always with the participation

and agreement of the author. This work can be done in pairs (with the teacher), in small groups, or in a collective time defined as time as **text work.**

Visitors: We adopted this word among ourselves to refer to the students who stayed in our class when their teacher was absent. In the year described here, this 'service' was in high demand... In a total of 173 school days, we had **visitors** on 102 days. To be totally honest, we also used the distribution service 1 day. Due to absences of students from the class itself, throughout the entire school year, there were only 20 days when the whole class was present, without visitors.

Weekly and daily plan: The weekly plan is drawn up at the beginning of each week, based on the class curriculum, which was discussed at the start of the school year, and the flow of projects and fixed work periods. It is broken down daily into the daily schedule or plan for the day. Daily assessments serve to monitor and readjust the flow of collective and individual work.

We liked / we didn't like: Headings for two of the three columns in the class diary, where we write what we want to discuss during the weekly Council meeting.

Workshops; Language / Math / Music / Drawing and painting: It was a categorisation of the activities included in the autonomous study time and plan work. It also allowed, at certain points in the class's journey, to facilitate the organisation of work, restricting the

range of activities at certain moments of the day, to facilitate interaction or to encourage the practice of specific skills. A math workshop session, for example, includes options for working with math worksheets, mathematical investigations, experiments, mathematical puzzles (LOCO), computer work with the Logo turtle, chess, checkers, and activities using the geoboard and tangram.

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Index

Opening note to this translation 5
Foreword 9
What you might find... or maybe not. 15
Undi N ta bai 19
The adult, a trainer in training. 19
The initial and current agitation 22
In search of an isomorphic model of educational work 26
Undi N ta bai? N ta deslokadu 29
Reflections of a permanently displaced educator. 29
I confess that I live... 29
Regarding this journey up to 1999 81
Grandi i Pikinote 87
Captivated between Outurela and Portela 87
More reflections from an educator – trainer. 315
Between school, children and teachers – part 3 333
Modi ke djudam. 351
Notes from some conversations 352
Influences of an influenced practice 362
Another kind of education is possible. 377
Lexicon 383
Bibliographic references 391
Index 397

One of the things I appreciate about your approach is that you talk about what you did while there are many theorists concerned with education"

Emailed by Manuel Paiva to the author.

Pascal Paulus was born in Oostende (Belgium) and graduated as a primary school teacher in 1977. He worked with children and adults in his homeland until 1986, when he settled in Portugal. Since then, he has alternated his work in primary schools with teacher training and participation in local development projects.
In 2005, he was a member of the teaching staff at the Amélia Vieira Luís Basic School in Outurela. He retired in 2024.

The author reflects on his own training, a result of interaction with others in which the roles of trainer and trainee continually intersect, and where institutional pedagogy and the pedagogy of the oppressed have left their mark.
He leads us into a detailed account of his first year working in a neighbourhood school in the Portuguese State education system. He recounts, in diary form, the anxieties, crises, and successes he experiences as a teacher of a group of 7 and 8-year-old children.
A critic of the restrictive school system, he advocates for an educational intervention in which the construction of meaning allows children to learn more and better.